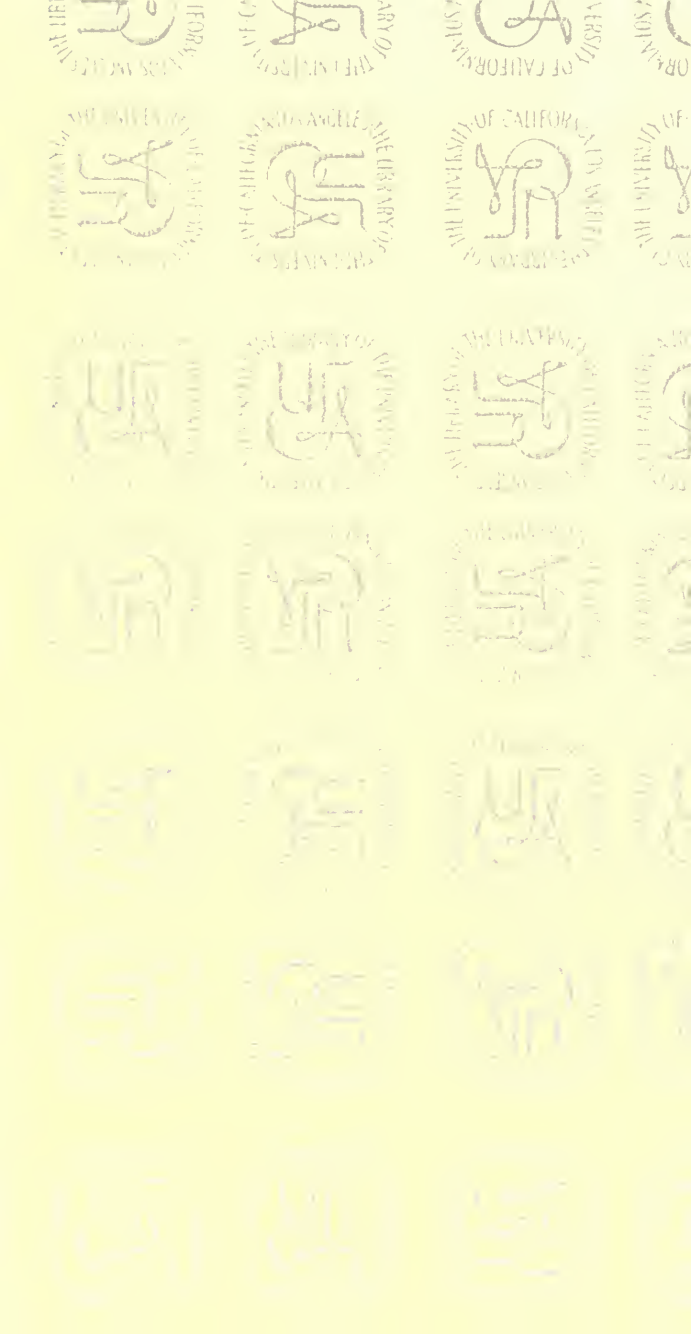




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AN ANTIDOTE TO INFIDELITY.

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# LECTURES

ON THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF

**Divine Revelation :**

DELIVERED AT SILVER STREET CHAPEL,

IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1831.

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BY JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

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WITH THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH FOLLOWED.

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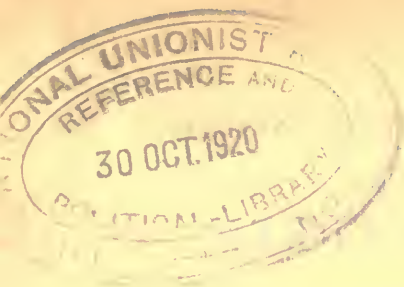
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THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF IMPOSTURE  
IN THE  
SCRIPTURE MIRACLES.

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JOHN X. 37, 38.

*"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works."*

HAVING announced a double course of Lectures, to defend both the internal and external evidences of revelation, I have determined to consider the former on the evenings of the Lord's day, that Christians may be edified by the consideration of the doctrines of Scripture; but the external evidences I have reserved for the Thursday evenings, that we may give a more free scope to our inquiries. I design, therefore, to go out of the ordinary way this evening, and to treat the subject in a style which the exigences of the times seem to demand. I begin with the Miracles which prove the Revelation of the Scriptures true and divine.

When I mention miracles; "Oh, miracles!" infidels exclaim: "these were mere tricks—slight of hand—juggling feats, to deceive the senses of men! Such things are not worth attention! What rational man would stoop to examine a miracle?"

All this is easily said, and it is a very convenient way of getting out of a difficulty, and shunning a question which one dares not face.

But, if no miracles had been wrought, to prove

religion true, how differently would infidels have argued! They would then have said something like what follows; for I shall, perhaps, put the argument in a stronger light than they would have placed it in themselves.

They would have said—"If God speaks to us in religion, and is giving us a revelation in the Bible, could he not do something to *show* that it is he who is speaking there? Any body can say that he is addressing us in God's name; but he only who really is commissioned to bring a revelation from heaven, could alter the course of nature, and work wonders beyond the power of man. This would strike attention, and rouse men to examine, and force them to weigh the contents of a book on which was set the broad seal of heaven. If God thinks it worth while to stoop to address us, he might go a little further, and show that he cares so much about us as to give us a revelation of his mind, by doing something supernatural, and giving us a striking display of the power of his arm." Thus, when Mahomet pretended to bring a new revelation from heaven, the Arabs bade him give some miraculous proofs of its divinity. He was driven to a subterfuge; and therefore said, the Koran is the greatest of miracles: but they who read it in the original know that it is no miracle.

But Infidels would say, "The same God that made our souls made our bodies too; and if he addresses our minds by a book, why does he not speak to our senses by something that shall compel us to say, 'this is the finger of God?' If we are called to put our souls under the guidance of this book, why does he not show that our bodies are under the control of him that gave it? It is said, 'that this Bible is the voice of him that made the world:' let him prove it then, by putting the world under some special control, that we may know that the God of

the Bible is he who established the laws of nature, and can alter or suspend them at his pleasure."

Something like this, Infidels would have been sure to say, if no miracles had been wrought to prove religion divine. And would they not have boasted that the argument was unanswerable? In vain we should have said, miracles are unnecessary or unsatisfactory. For infidels would have exclaimed, "miracles are necessary; and surely God could work such wonders as should satisfy every man that they were Divine." Could we have hoped to persuade them, that there was no occasion for miracles? "No, no," they would have said, "we have proved miracles to be the appropriate evidence of revelation, and without them we have a right to reject it." Well then, we may take it as upon their own showing, that whenever God introduces a new revelation which demands our belief, we may ask, "What sign showest thou?"

• But what shall be the kind of miracles wrought? Shall they be works of judgment? Should God strike some men dead, in order to prove to others, that it is at the peril of their lives they reject his message? I see you shrink at this. With a significant shrug, you reply, "*That* is too much of a home-thrust; for it makes us think of being struck dead ourselves for our Infidelity." "But softly! softly!" you exclaim, "religion is a message of mercy; it speaks of pardon to us sinners, and grace to make us saints. If so; miracles of judgment would not be quite in keeping with the message; the seals would not suit the parchment; this would be like bidding the herald fire grape shot down the streets, when he goes to proclaim peace at Charing Cross. Miracles of mercy would be rather better; and we should prefer seeing some mightily good things done. It would be rather more amusing, to see men healed

in a moment, than to see them smitten with disease, to see them, not put to death, but rise from the dead; to behold storms laid, rather than raised. This would be better fitted to make us believe that God sent this religion to save us from moral disease and eternal death."

Well, we are glad we can suit you. The miracles which religion says she has to produce, to prove her message true, are just of that kind that you would like best, and that you think most suited to her professed errand. The miracles wrought, to introduce the Old Testament to the Jews, effected their deliverance from cruel slavery. The plagues that smote Egypt were not sent, till the slave holders had, for a long time, refused to give liberty to their slaves; and Jehovah sent minor strokes, before the death of the first-born in every house compelled the enemy to let Israel go free. When Pharaoh, afterwards, changed his mind, and pursued the fugitives, the drowning of the tyrant and all his soldiers in the Red Sea, was such a judgment as many an Infidel would say, a tyrant and his standing army deserved. But the grand miracle was, making a way through the sea, for an oppressed people to go forth into a good land, where they might live at liberty.

Their being supported in the desert by manna, for forty years, was a miracle of mercy. The giving of the law on mount Sinai, amidst thunders and lightnings and the voice of Deity, heard by millions at once, was also a miracle of mercy; for the whole law was included in one word, "*love.*"

But the miracles which Christianity produces, to prove her claims on our belief, were all acts of mercy, except one, wrought upon a tree, to wither it in a moment, as a warning sign to those who, under special culture from heaven, bring forth no good fruits. All the other miracles which sealed

the truth of the Gospel, are such as healing the sick, feeding the hungry, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead.

Now these are such things as appeal to common sense. Here are no refined speculations of which none but learned and scientific men can judge. Any one that has eyes and ears, and a sound understanding, though he were a labourer, or a mechanic, can tell whether he sees a dead man raised from the grave or not; and it requires nothing but common sense to enable the *subjects* of the miracle to say, as one whom Christ healed did, "one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Now this makes Christianity a matter of fact. Its truth or falsehood is a common sense question, which should make honest men, of good plain sense, say, "I will fairly face this thing and examine it thoroughly, and see whether it is true or not."

These things were not done in a corner. We are not told of what happened, nobody knows where, or when. But the miracles that religion appeals to were wrought before thousands of witnesses, in the open face of day. They are said to have been performed in different places, usually amidst vast crowds, often in the capital city, at the public festivals, whither witnesses of all characters were attracted from all parts of the country, and even from foreign lands.

Infidels cannot say, that the wondrous works were performed in the presence of none but friends, who being partial, would be disposed to give them credit, and spread their report. For the leaders of the Jewish nation were bitter enemies to Jesus; they watched him narrowly, to find every plausible pretext for opposing him, and every opportunity to destroy his credit, and, if possible, to find out how they might put him to death. His Apostles were watched and opposed in the same way; so that

if there were any deceitful tricks they would have been sure to be found out. There was no want of power, or of wealth, to procure exposure of the imposture, if there had been any; for the priests and the rulers were all alarmed lest Jesus should destroy their credit, and hurl them from their seats.

Nor were the miracles all of one kind; so as to excite a suspicion that they were the effects of some secret art, some peculiar method of doing one surprising thing. All sorts of works were wrought to prove the Gospel true. People afflicted in various ways were brought promiscuously before Jesus, "and he healed them all." Now the blind were restored to sight, and then the paralytic to the use of their limbs; here the deaf and dumb obtained hearing and speech, and there the dropsical recovered their natural size and strength; this man was cured of a leprosy, and that woman with a crooked spine was made straight, and enabled to walk upright; to day four or five thousand were fed; and to morrow a storm in the sea shall be hushed to immediate calmness; in one place a man with a withered hand was restored to the use of his limb, and in another the servant of a nobleman was suddenly healed by Jesus, while at a distance. Last of all, Jesus, after raising others, is said to have raised himself from the dead, though he had been publicly executed, and his body was in the hands of his enemies, who placed a guard of soldiers round his tomb, aware that he had said, "After three days I will rise again."

Some of the miracles were on that grand scale that absolutely precludes all suspicion of any little juggling trick. Many thousands were fed with what would have scarcely satisfied a dozen; and the stormy sea was hushed in a moment by the voice of a man. The giving of the law on mount Sinai, to millions of spectators, amidst the convulsions of nature, is a sufficient specimen of a miracle upon a



vast scale, on which God alone can work. For every candid inquirer after truth must see, that the heavens and the earth are not a field for a juggler to play his feats upon. Every rational demand of evidence is fairly met, and turn which way we will, we see proof sufficient to convince us, that the miracles of divine revelation are satisfactory evidences that the message came from God.

But Infidels say, "It is easy to make men believe that miracles were wrought; for people are credulous, and fond of wonders, and run away with strange stories, and do not love to have them confuted." In all this there is some truth, and some falsehood. It is not so easy to succeed in a mere pretence to miracle-working as some may fancy. False pretences may be easily believed, but they are also easily detected, and exposed to ridicule, contempt and abhorrence. Of this we may bring many proofs.

It was for some time supposed that Ann Moor of Tutbury lived without food. But this depended much on her own testimony; for who could pretend to watch a person every moment, day and night, to be sure that she never received the smallest portion of nourishment? The strange report, however, brought to her house a multitude of visitors, who left her presents, by which she and her family were enriched; so that the wonderful tale was to them a goose with golden eggs. But how soon was the goose cut open and prevented from laying any more eggs? The imposture was detected. She was watched by scientific men night and day. She was placed on one of Merlin's beds, and weighed every hour, and found to lose weight, as any other person would who had not taken food. She was made to breathe into lime water, and the film produced on it shewed that her stomach contained food, which emitting carbonic acid gas, produced, on the surface of the water, a carbonate of lime. She was proved to have

taken food, she confessed it, and sunk into contempt and wretchedness.

In the reign of Louis the fourteenth, miracles were said to be wrought in France at the tomb of a Frenchman, called the Abbé Paris. But the king commanded the burying ground to be shut up, and all the miracles ceased; so that one of the French wits inscribed on the gates of the burying ground, "By order of His Majesty the King; the Almighty is forbidden to work any more miracles here." But who does not see that this spurious pretence to miracles serves to prove, by force of contrast, the reality of those wrought by prophets and apostles? For when these were forbidden, by priests and rulers, to go on with the Divine work, did miracles cease? No; the enemy said with mortification and shame, "What do we? For that notable miracles are wrought by these men is manifest to all, and we cannot deny it."

In the reign of one of the first princes of the house of Hanover, some persons that were called French prophets, claiming the power of working miracles, made a great noise in this country. At last, they asserted that they could raise the dead, and one of their number, having been buried in St. Paul's Church yard, they undertook to raise him to life again. The government wisely suffered them to try, and, in order to give them a fair field, soldiers were placed around to keep off the mob. The attempt failed, and the whole affair sunk, first into ridicule, and then into oblivion.

Prince Hohenlohe, a Catholic Priest, lately pretended to work miracles; but the subjects of them were all friends, Catholic devotees, who were well disposed to believe, or fancy them true; and they were not of that nature to satisfy scrupulous inquirers. And what do we hear of them now? Unable to bear investigation, they have been scouted

and compelled to flee from the laughter of ridicule and the finger of scorn.

It is not so easy an affair, then, to set up for a worker of miracles, and to maintain their credit as may be imagined. For if some are eager to believe, others are as eager to expose them ; and while one party has an appetite for the marvellous, another is as obstinately incredulous.

But you who say, that it is so easy to make men believe we can work miracles, ought to prove your own words, by making us believe that *you* can. You say miracles were juggling tricks, such as conjurors play to deceive the senses of men. Well, there are as clever conjurors now as ever there were, let them try to do such things as were wrought to prove religion divine. Let them deceive people by making them believe the blind have been restored to sight. Did any conjurors make weeping sisters fancy that their brother was raised from the grave, and brought home to live with them again ? Jesus made people believe this. What juggler would profess to be able to allay a storm at sea ? Jesus did this. What professor of phantasmagoria could make a whole nation believe that he led them all through the sea, as Moses did ? Where is the slight of hand that can quench the thirst of myriads, by making people fancy that water was brought for them from a rock ?

You say, that these things were not really done, but men's senses were imposed upon by deceptive appearances. The best way to prove this, would be, to do something similar yourselves, and try if you cannot deceive people too. The religion of the Bible which you dislike, was established in the world by these means, and has taken such root that you cannot tear it up. Why ? Because you have done nothing like this in the world, to strike the minds of men and take hold of their hearts. But why do you not attempt something of this kind, and fight

religion with its own weapons? The field is open before you. There is no act of parliament against working miracles. Why should you not set about it?

Perhaps you say, "Those ages when religion was introduced were ignorant and barbarous, just fit to be wrought upon by such deceitful tricks; but this age is too knowing and refined to be gulled by such arts." Such an assertion is more easily made than proved. When Christianity arose, there were such writers as, Virgil, and Cicero, and Horace. Were these ignorant barbarians? Euclid had then written, and he is our master in mathematics still: all the first poets, and sculptors, and architects, had then produced such works as we are proud to imitate. The cities of Herculaneum, and Pompeii, which were overwhelmed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, soon after the Christian era, have been since laid open and proved the high cultivation of those ages.

But, in our days, we have seen, that we have still a sufficient crowd of simpletons, who may be deceived as easily as any ancient mob. What multitudes have followed Johanna Southcot! What success has attended other modern impostors! Courage, infidels, is there not still hope of making people believe in your miracles? Come, try.

For consider, if this age should be somewhat more enlightened than that in which the foundations of religion were laid by miracles; you think that you also are more enlightened than the Apostles and Prophets were. You believe yourselves, to say the least, as much above the vulgar of your age, as they were above the mass of theirs. If you have a mightier task, you have greater powers; if you have a harder mass to work upon, you have better instruments to work with. If society has risen, you have risen along with it; so that you are relatively as

well off, for performing your task, as you think the Apostles were for accomplishing their object.

Why, then, should you shrink from rivalling Apostles and Prophets in their own line? You think they had no supernatural powers from heaven, and that you have superior sense beyond your age, to see through the deception which priestcraft is practising on men. If the founders of the church had no aid from Omnipotence, you have some from natural philosophy, and chemistry, which can now do such things as in former ages would have been thought impossible. Come, come, then, screw up your courage to the sticking place. Why should you hesitate? Strike a bold stroke, and work us some new wonders. These will do more for infidelity than all your speeches. You may thus build your system upon the ruins of that which in a barbarous age was reared to provoke your wrath. Voltaire said he was sick of hearing that twelve men had laid the foundation of the Christian church; and he hoped to prove that one could destroy it. If he had succeeded, it would not have proved him greater than all the twelve Apostles, nor than any one of them. For a building that required twelve of the finest geniuses to erect, may be destroyed by the greatest fool. Yet did Voltaire destroy Christianity?

But, come, now for your miracles. Lead out some four or five thousand of your followers to Clapham Common, haranguing them all day upon the superiority of infidelity over the religion of the Bible: when they are faint and hungry, and cry out for something to eat, tell them that they need not go away, for you will feed them. Say that there is a lad here with half a dozen biscuits and three or four fishes. And if any of the crowd should exclaim, "Poh! what are they among so many?" say to them, "Don't be afraid. If a Jew in an obscure country, and in a barbarous age, could satisfy such a crowd

with such a modicum of food, do you think we can not?" Then try your powers, and fill their stomachs, and leave ten times more food, after they are all satisfied, than there was before. The crowd will doubtless shout, "This is the man! we will make him king; for with such a talent, he will be more than a match for all the modern priest-ridden kings."

But, you say, "that Jesus never did this: he only made the people *believe* that he did it. They either were not really fed, or were fed from some vast store sufficient for thousands." Well, we want you to make people *believe* that you have fed them, from a trifling quantity that you can hold in your hand. We don't object to your having hampers of loaves, and fishes enough for thousands; only no body must see it, for that would spoil all, and destroy the miracle. And if such quantities of food could not be concealed, then you have no resource but to make them *fancy* they have had a good dinner. This will spread your fame through all London, thousands will protest that they have found out that others can do as great things as Jesus did, and that there is a way of filling empty stomachs with thoughts, and satisfying the cravings of hunger with imaginations.

But, perhaps you think this is too large a theatre for a mere beginner, and that four or five thousand witnesses are rather too many to make your first effort before them; for *all* may not have stomachs that can feed upon fancies; and if a few should say, "after all, I am hungry and faint," they would destroy your credit. For the difficulty of this kind of miracle is, that the multitude must be, not mere *spectators*, but also themselves the *subjects* of the miracle, and may therefore find out whether they have been fed or not. Let us, then, have fewer subjects, if we have more spectators.

You shall. You are bold men, who can venture to give the lie to prophets and apostles, and brave



heaven and earth, in your attempts to overturn the religion of the Bible. Lead out all London ; for its whole population would not be equal to the number of witnesses who were assembled to see the miracle by which Moses proved his religion true and divine. Conduct the myriads to Shooter's Hill, and let that be your Mount Sinai. There let the leader of the Infidel host proclaim, that he will give as good proofs, that his system is true, as ever Moses furnished in support of the Jewish religion. While the million is gathered round the foot of the hill, let your Moses go up, in the view of them all, to the summit. Then let the multitude feel the ground shake under them, till every creature tremble and fear lest the earth should open and swallow them all up. Never mind frightening them heartily ; for they will, after that, believe you more implicitly, and do all that you bid them, for the destruction of the priests and their book. Then let black clouds gather round the top of the hill, and flames burst forth, and a fire burn up to heaven, as if the last conflagration were come to melt the elements with fervent heat. Let the note of preparation be heard, as though you had summoned all the trumpeters of the army, with one united mighty blast to wake their souls to hear. Then let an articulate intelligible voice speak, and every one hear and understand. Come, don't be afraid. You say Moses made a million of people hear at once, or fancy that they heard what they took to be the voice of God. Then why should not you ? Lift up your voice like a trumpet. If you make yourself hoarse for a month, you will have the benefit of it for years.

But I see you are playing the poltroon, and shrinking from a few difficulties, saying in your heart, "I could not make all the people in one of the longer streets hear me at once ; and if I could not be heard half-way down Oxford-street, how am

I to make the whole population of London hear me from Shooter's Hill?"

Well, though I have tried to put you in the method, I fear I must give it up, for I really do not see how I can help you out of this difficulty. But if I must give it up, so must you. Will you own then, that you are vanquished? "No; never, never," you cry; "that would be too humiliating; right or wrong, we must maintain our point."

"Stop then," you say, "we have just thought of a loop-hole by which we may slip out of this confounding embarrassment, without appearing so ridiculous as our opponents would make us. We deny that Moses ever did this that is recorded concerning the giving of the law on mount Sinai." Well, at any rate, he made the Jews believe that it was done; and why should not you make all London believe that something as great has been done by you, even though nothing at all has been done? Unreasonable men, what are you hesitating at? Are not you as clever as Moses? And don't you say that he was no more commissioned from heaven, or armed with miraculous powers than you are, and that you can do as much as he ever really did? Then why cannot we persuade you to try? Surely you either may do what it is said he did, or, without doing it, make people believe it was done, which you say was the whole amount of his achievements.

But perhaps you will still make an effort to keep up your credit, and tell us, "Moses never even made the Jews believe that their law was given on mount Sinai, amidst manifest signs of Deity." Oh, well; if that is your turn, I wish I could change this night to to-morrow night, Friday, and this place to Duke's-place. There in the Synagogue you should see this law written up in Hebrew letters, the language in which it is said to have been delivered on mount Sinai. Ask the Jews why they have invented



this law, and palmed it upon God. They will tell you, "We never invented it, we sometimes should like to get rid of it, for it is rather too strict, and condemns us for not keeping it. It is not our manufacture : we received it from our fathers, and before we could write Hebrew, we learned to repeat this law as given to us by God. If you ask our oldest men, they will tell you, that they received it from their fathers, who again declared that they had it from theirs ; and thus you may go back till you come to the very days of Moses, when a whole nation could never have been persuaded that they had received this law from the lips of God, amidst signs which shook creation, if no such thing had occurred ;" just as you know that you cannot make all London believe that you have made them hear you speak like a God, to a million of people from Shooter's Hill.

But, come now, we wish to be liberal, and we will give you another trial upon a smaller scale. Go to Bartholomew's Hospital, which is just at hand, and take your choice of a subject for a miracle. Perhaps you may not find there a man born blind, but you may find a paralytic man, lying on a bed from which he never rises but when he is lifted out ; or you can take your choice of a dropsical man who has come to be tapped. Now, in so fine a field, it would be a shame to be idle. Pluck up your courage, and try your hand at a miracle upon some one among them all. You say that Jesus deceived the eyes of the spectators, and why should not you ? for you think yourselves as mighty as he, since you say he was no greater or better than you.

Here the spectators are not the greatest difficulty, but the sick man himself is the puzzle. Yet, if you say, " Ah, there is the rub ! how to make a man whose limbs are paralysed think himself well, and by the force of fancy to walk and carry his bed ! how to persuade a man swollen with dropsy, to feel

or fancy that the water has all disappeared, and his limbs are small and firm!" Don't be discouraged at this; for what has been done before, may be done again. But I see you are afraid of failure, and we must leave this poor man to the doctor, or to death, for fear you should be laughed at.

You shall not, however, say that Christians run you hard, and push you into a corner, to enjoy their cruel sport at the expense of the infidels. Come, now, to the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, in the Kent Road—look about you, and see what a number of fine subjects for a miracle. They are all as dumb as fishes, because they are all as deaf as posts. Jesus made people to believe that he caused in a moment the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. Then surely you can, for some of you say you are a great deal better than he. Gather a crowd, then, and bring forth your subject, and put your hand upon his ears, and say, "Be opened." Lay your finger upon his tongue, and bid it be loosed. Make the deaf hear you, and the dumb tongue to say, "Thank you, Sir, for your kindness; I can now hear and speak as well as you." And let the crowd follow you through the streets, praising the infidels, and saying that they can work miracles as well as Jesus. Ah! I see *you* are deaf to all my proposals, fair and honourable as they are, and you are become dumb as fishes; for there is not one of you that has courage to reply, "Well, so I will; and you shall see that I can work miracles, or at least make people believe that I can."

Yet, after all, we will give you another chance. You know that Christians believe that Jesus raised the dead, more than once. *You* say he only made people *believe* that he did it. Well, why should not you do the same? One *make-believe* will be a set-off against another, and you will destroy what you call the great delusion. Now, there are plenty of burial grounds about London, and we may find

some one who has been interred three or four days, so that he is fresh in the memory of his friends, and they can tell when they see him again; and we can find some sisters who are still weeping for their deceased brother.

Now, gather your witnesses: you need not want spectators. Go to the grave; but stop—go first to the house of the mourners, and take them with you; for they will care most about the business. When you are come to the tomb, lift your voice, in bold style, as you know well enough how to do, and say, “Mr. Such-a-one, rise;” and see if you cannot persuade all about you that they behold him rising.

But why do you look so blank? What is the matter with you? You have courage enough to oppose and revile Jesus; why have you none to imitate and rival him? Are you saying to yourselves, “Though we should make all the people fancy that they saw the dead man rise; for a burial ground is a fine place for a morbid imagination to play its pranks in; yet that would not be enough; and the mischief is, that we could not make the sisters fancy that their dead brother went home and lived with them afterwards. If we could, we should have a splendid triumph; for then we should be invited to a good dinner, and people would come, not only to see us dine, but for the sake of seeing the man whom we raised from the dead sitting at table with us, as multitudes came, ‘not merely to see Jesus, but Lazarus also, whom he raised from the dead.’”

If it should be said, that Jesus and his apostles neither wrought miracles, nor made men believe that they were wrought; but that the whole story has been invented in later days: it is easy to meet this mode of putting the thing. The writings of the New Testament can be traced back to the very time when the miracles were said to have been wrought,

and when it would have been impossible to gain credit to the story, if it had not been true. Martyrs died for their faith in Jesus, while yet the persons were living on whom the miracles were wrought ; and the history of the Roman Empire begins to be inoculated, if I may so express it, with Christian affairs, as soon as we come to the period when, according to the Christian history, we ought to expect to find the mention of its events.

Again, if infidels say, Jesus and his apostles neither wrought miracles, nor made men at the time believe that any were wrought ; but that others, in later days, spread a false story ; we challenge you to do the same. Neither work miracles, nor make men believe that you did ; but spread the report that you did, and commit it to writing, and make the world believe it, and men die for it, if ——— you can.

Hume's famous argument, as it is called, may now demand notice. He says, " Miracles are an appeal to testimony against experience. My experience tells me, that the laws of nature are never altered ; but I am called upon to believe, upon the testimony of others, that these laws have been reversed, in the case of miracles. Now, I have more reason to believe my own experience, that the laws of nature are not altered, than I have any man's testimony that they are."

Now for the answer. Hume says, his experience tells him the laws of nature are not altered. But his experience could tell him of nothing before he was born ; nor of what happened since, except on the very limited spot where he stood. As to all that occurred prior to his existence, or as to all that was occurring, in other parts of the world, while he was speaking or writing, he could know nothing except — by what ? by testimony. That very testimony he was attempting to disparage. So that, after all, he knew that the laws of nature were not frequently altered, only by testimony.

Well, I suppose we must give up the attempt to make you try to work miracles; for I shall never persuade you to try this one bold stroke, that would do more execution, if it should succeed, than all the petty blows you are now aiming at religion. But, till you can venture upon this, you should hold your peace about miracles; and let Christians talk away here, as they please; while you, by your silence, tell aloud that you cannot answer them.

For, much as you hate the word *mystery*, you must confess that there is some mystery here, that you cannot fathom; how Jesus should satisfy people that he wrought miracles upon thousands, and you, who are so much cleverer, cannot make us believe that you can work one! Only recollect, that if you cannot meet this one argument, it remains a proof that revealed religion is true.

But now, I hear you cry, "If miracles were ever wrought, why should they not be wrought now?" Because there are enough wrought, to convince any rational candid man, who really wishes to know the truth; and when God has done enough, he is too wise to do any thing more. You might almost as well say, "If the world ever were created, why is it not created again?" But even a child will tell you, that, having been once created, it neither requires nor admits a second creation. If miracles were made common, they would cease to be miracles, and to answer their end.

If you say, "Why should not miracles be wrought for me, as well as for others?" we can answer, "Because others were placed in circumstances in which you are not. You live in times in which religion has been proved true, by the fulfilment of prophecies, and by many other evidences, which former generations could not enjoy. You, therefore, have as good opportunities for being convinced of the truth of religion without miracles, as others had with them." But you say, "If we saw miracles we would believe."

Not you, indeed. Nothing would convince the despisers of the Scriptures; "for if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead."

But, stop—I will be more liberal than you expect. I will promise you miracles. Now I hear you exclaim, "This Lecturer has challenged us to work miracles, and we durst not take his challenge; but he is going to furnish one himself, and we will watch the thing narrowly, to detect the cheat." What is this miracle? You, yourselves, shall be one. I have shown you, that nothing can be more convincing than that kind of wonder where the witness is himself the subject of the mighty work. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." What a miracle! a miracle of mercy, where one might have expected a prodigy of judgment! God will forgive you, after all your impiety, unbelief, and blasphemy. That Christ will forgive you the sin of treating him as an impostor, should be regarded as one of the greatest of miracles. But this, like all his miracles, will be gloriously complete. There will be nothing left to wish for, to give it the stamp of divinity. For so perfect will be his forgiveness that he will never reproach you with your former infidelity, or say to you, when you cast yourselves at his feet for pardon, "But remember you once denied my name, rejected my credentials, and ridiculed my friends as the dupes of imposture." No, he reproaches none that come to him; but "receives them graciously, loves them freely, and casts all their sins behind his back, as a stone into the depths of the sea."

For if any revile and reproach you, and treat you as those who can never be forgiven, I have no sympathy with them. If any threaten and persecute you, I know they will receive no thanks, for their mistaken zeal, from him, who said to those who would call for fire from heaven, "ye know not what



spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy mens' lives, but to save them."

I utterly disapprove of all persecutions for infidelity. Christianity does not need them. She cannot approve them. When the religion of Jesus first came forth into the world, it had to sustain fiercer attacks than those which now threaten it. Deists and atheists, philosophers and literati, priests, magistrates and kings all opposed it; but it defended itself against a united world, by the strength of its evidence, and the divinity of its spirit. Strong in its foundation, firmly fixed upon a rock, benevolent in its temper, and unwearied in its patient endurance of sufferings; it fled to no human resources, asked no earthly aids; but said, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and bringing every thought into obedience to Christ."

In the same strength it conquered once a hostile world, and shall conquer again. Its true friends never call in the civil force to protect it from attacks, and to spread its influence through the world.

But again, Christ will make you a new creature, and "turn your heart of stone to flesh." Will not that be a miracle? Then you will have a proof of the truth of religion, in your own breast; "for he that believeth hath the witness in himself." This miracle all real Christians carry about with them. How vain, then, is your attempt to shake their faith! You may make infidels of those who never were really Christians; but if you become Christians indeed, you will say to all the attacks of infidels, "Alas! poor men! if they knew what evidences of religion I carry in my bosom, they would as soon attempt to persuade me out of my existence, as to argue me out of that which is to me a new and better existence." God grant that you may find this mercy! Then may he give you grace to undo, as far as possible, all the mischief you have done, or

laboured to do; and cause you to say, “ I once studied to seduce men from the path to heaven, and to plunge them into hell; and shall I not now labour, with far more zeal, to bring them to that Saviour whom I have found, and to that heaven already begun within my breast?”

Infidel, though I have rallied you, for the sake of making you feel my argument; my heart has yearned over you, longing to rescue you from the destruction you are courting, and to bring you to taste the mercy, and grace, and holiness, and happiness of the religion you now despise. Lord Jesus, thou who hast, with thy dying breath, pleaded for thy murderers, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” smile on this attempt to turn thine enemies into friends !



# THE DISCUSSION

WHICH FOLLOWED

## THE FIRST LECTURE.

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After the religious service had closed, a gentleman took the chair. A pause of about five minutes ensued, when Mr. Taylor rose and asked, Whether the Lecturer did not say that miracles were designed to introduce a new dispensation of religion ?

The Lecturer answered, That he did say so ; for when the Jewish dispensation was given to the world the miracles of Moses confirmed it, and proved that it came from God ; and when the Christian dispensation was given, this was introduced and confirmed by the miracles of Christ and his apostles.

Mr. Taylor replied, Then we are in a new dispensation ?

The drift of this question was not exactly perceived ; but, after something like private questioning and explaining, it was answered, That the Jewish dispensation was given for an inferior state of things ; and as it consisted much of rites and ceremonies, it was suited to the less advanced state of the church ; but the Christian was that new and better dispensation, which, being more spiritual and intellectual, suited a more advanced state of the church and the world.

Mr. Taylor then said, Were not the Jews assured that their law should be permanent, lasting as the sun, and perpetual as the days of heaven ?

It was answered, Their own law taught them to look for the coming of a great personage, like Moses, their lawgiver, who said, “ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of

thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."

Mr. Taylor.—Then if the Christian is a new and second dispensation, may we not look for a third to supersede this?

It was answered, Though Moses and the prophets taught the Jews to look for a Messiah, who should have legislative powers like Moses, when Jesus that Messiah came, he taught us to look for no third dispensation, except his coming a second time, to judge the world, and fix all things in their eternal state.

The Lecturer then said, But though I have answered these questions, I appeal to the chair and to the assembly, whether I had not a right to expect that the questions would refer to the preceding Lecture, on the Miracles which proved divine revelation true?

Mr. Taylor then said, I regret that the Lecturer did not write his discourse, that he might have referred to what he had said.

The Lecturer replied, It shall be in the press, to-morrow, that it may be answered from the press, as it is here open to discussion with the living voice.

Mr. Taylor said, The Lecturer affirmed that the miracles of Jesus were public—but this is not true, for that at the marriage of Cana was not public, but wrought in a private coterie of friends; and Dr. Belsham has said, that the resurrection of Christ was a private miracle.

Dr. Bennett answered, There are distinct things mixed up in this question, and I am not sure that I shall recollect them all; but I will endeavour to take them in their order. The miracle wrought at the marriage of Cana, in Galilee, was not mentioned in the Lecture, and I am therefore not bound to answer this question; but I will not avail myself of

this right ; for my object is frankly to meet any difficulty. The miracle wrought, then, at the marriage of Cana, was any thing but private. It was wrought before all the world, taking that phrase as it is used in common parlance to mean any body, or every body. Every one knows that an Eastern marriage is like an Irish funeral, as public as crowds and festivities can make it ; and that this was the case at the marriage of Cana is manifest, from the circumstance which occasioned the miracle. The crowds that came to the wedding were so great, that the wine, which was the ordinary beverage of the country, was exhausted, and there was nothing for the guests to drink. This caused the application to the Saviour, who turned the water into wine, to supply the numerous company that flocked to the wedding.

But even if this had not been so public as the other miracles of Jesus, it would form no objection to Christianity ; for it is expressly declared, that “ this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him.” For Jesus was but beginning to call disciples to attend him, and this miracle was designed to prove that he was a master worthy to be followed, so that the satisfaction of the disciples was the design of this miracle, which, after all, was substantially a public, and not a private one.

The resurrection of Christ was, I think, the next thing mentioned.

To this Mr. Taylor assented.\*

Dr. Bennett. — As to what Dr. Belsham has said of the resurrection of Christ being a private miracle ; it must be well known that Dr. Belsham’s views and mine are as wide apart as the poles. I

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\* It was recollected afterwards that the raising of Lazarus was said to be another private miracle ; but this, at the time, escaped the recollection of the Lecturer, and as Mr. Taylor consented to take the resurrection of Christ next, the raising of Lazarus was not again mentioned.

must not, therefore, be expected to admit his assertions. I deny that the resurrection of Christ was a private miracle. In the first place, his crucifixion was not private ; it was a public execution, all saw him expire on the cross. In the next place, his body was in the possession of the public, and they set a guard of soldiers over the tomb, to preserve the corpse until the third day. For, in the last place, Christ's own declaration was public, that he would raise himself on the third day. On the commencement of his ministry, when asked, " what sign shewest thou, that we may know that thou hast authority to do these things : " he answered, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again ; but he spake of the temple of his body." This the priests and rulers of the Jewish nation remembered, and therefore applied to the Roman governor for a military guard, saying, " Sir, we remember that this deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead." Here then every thing was public ; the death of the Saviour ; his declared purpose of rising ; and the preservation of his body, under the care of the magistrates and the guard of the military : and now at last, on the third day, the body was gone, and that very event occurred which all the power of the state was employed to prevent : for they could not produce the body, and this was the public notorious fact which gives us a right to say, that the resurrection of Christ was not a private miracle.

Mr. Taylor said, Then the body of Christ was raised, that same material body that was buried and subject to the same laws as other bodies, what became of it then ? What was its state ?

It was answered.—He that formed our bodies can

do with them what he pleases, they are the mere creatures of his power ; and after the resurrection, they will be made immortal. But there is a class of persons, those who shall be found on the earth when Christ comes to judgment, who will not pass through the process of death and the resurrection, but though " we shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed," and fixed in an immortal state.

Mr. Taylor said, But these Scriptures declare that there are spirits of devils working miracles, and that they shall deceive the nations, and shall cause fire to come down from heaven, and that the coming of the man of sin shall be with signs and lying wonders : how are we poor mortals, then, to distinguish between these lying wonders and the true miracles ?

Answer.—Here several things which are totally distinct are mixed up. Some of the questions of the gentleman are taken from the Revelation, a book confessedly mysterious, because written in symbolical language, in order so to declare things which were to come to pass that the prediction might not be so plain as to prevent its own fulfilment, and yet, when explained by the event, might be clearly seen to have been given by divine prescience. Quotations taken from such a book require, therefore, to be distinguished from other parts of Scripture, and cannot fairly be brought into this discussion.

Mr. Taylor.—Then I wave those texts which were taken from the Apocalypse. If the devil does not deceive men, it is clear from the Scriptures that God does, for is it not said that " He shall send them strong delusions that they shall believe a lie" ?

Answer.—Assuming then that there is a God who governs the world, may I not appeal to the conviction of all, that, in the course of his government, this does occur which is here declared. For it must be remembered that the apostle says, " because men receive not the love of the truth, God shall send them strong delusions that they might believe a lie."

And is it not manifest that, when men turn away their attention from the evidences of the truth, things do occur which inflame their passions, and bind them fast in their delusions. The enemies of divine revelation are often suffered to meet with that which increases their enmity.

Here Mr. Taylor said, I am an infidel, but I am no enemy to divine revelation, and I solemnly declare that I know no man in existence an enemy to divine revelation. If I am an enemy to what is called divine revelation, it is because I do not believe it to be divine.

Answer.—If I use the term enemy to divine revelation, it is because I speak according to my own sentiments, as every man must do; for I know not the exact sentiments of others. I speak therefore of enemies to that revelation which I believe to be divine. If there are no enemies to this; I am glad of it; for I know not why any man should be an enemy to it. Why should any one be an enemy to light? If any man should be opposed to the lamps in this building, and be disposed to put them out, I should ask, Why? what harm can they do? We have not so much light, as to create inconvenience; and if we have not too much light with them, we should have too little without them. Even with divine revelation, we have not too much light on all that which it most concerns us to know. And why should we wish to extinguish that light which gives us information on those important questions on which man has so much reason to be inquisitive?

Mr. Taylor.—But I suppose the Lecturer will admit what was asserted by Dr. Whitby: that man is not accountable for his belief: our belief is the necessary result of what appears to us to be evidence of truth.

Answer.—This is a metaphysical question that does not enter into the plain matter of fact concerning the truth or falsehood of the miracles which

confirm divine revelation, which are the proper subjects of this evening's discussion. But though I might, I will not decline this question. I utterly deny then that man is not accountable for his belief. If he is not accountable for his belief he is accountable for nothing; for all his actions spring from his belief. Is it not notorious that a man's belief is influenced by his moral character? According as he likes or dislikes a thing, he turns his attention towards it, or away from it. When any sentiment presents its evidences to the mind; if the heart is averse to it, we look askew at its evidences, and turn instantly towards those things which seem to contradict it; till, at length, we acquire that distorted position which makes us lose sight of an unwelcome truth, and keep nothing in view but that which suits our taste.

Mr. Taylor.—I have but one more question to put to the Lecturer: Can an honest, upright, moral heathen, Jew, or infidel, be saved?

Answer.—This is a question which I am not bound to answer, for it does not belong to the subject. But I have no objection to say, that I feel it my happiness that I am not called to sit in judgment upon my fellow creatures, or to intrude into the judgment-seat, which is my Maker's place, or to usurp his prerogative, of deciding upon the fate of men. I have enough to do with my own state, and to prepare for my own appearance before the Divine tribunal. From that Book, which is my only source of information, I learn, that "They who have sinned without law, shall be judged without law, and they who have sinned under the law, shall be judged by the law;" that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, and for heathen who have not heard the Gospel, than for those who have had the advantage of its light, and have rejected it. The Lord grant that you and I may find mercy in that day!





THE  
JEWS LIVING WITNESSES  
TO THE  
TRUTH OF DIVINE REVELATION.

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ISAIAH xliii. 12.

*“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.”*

IF I were to say, “Did you ever see a Jew?” you would reply, “Yes, certainly; I have not lived to these years, without seeing one of that singular nation; if a nation they can be called, who are scattered among all nations, and have no country of their own. I have marked or rather studied their countenance, for they have so singular a physiognomy, that I think I should know one of them, at first sight, and could hardly ever be deceived. I have taxed my discernment, to discover wherein lies their peculiar characteristic feature. Is it the quick, bright eye? Is it the aquiline nose? Is it the lip, especially the upper lip? Or is it what the French call the *tout ensemble*, the combined effect of the whole? Whatever it is, it is most expressive; for no one would say, it is the look of a fool; though infidels, who have no good liking to them, have said it is that of a rogue. But amiable and honourable men are to be found among them, as well as among others. Then there is their speech,

which is scarcely less marked and striking than their looks ; for though they may have been born in England, they have the accent of a foreigner, yet not that of a Frenchman, or of an Italian, or of a man of any other country with which we are acquainted. Whether their peculiar speech arises from their being early trained to utter the strange sounds of Hebrew, and to join in the singing of that language in their Synagogues, or from whatever other cause it may spring, they do not speak English like an Englishman, nor, I should suppose, French like a Frenchman."

I am glad you have taken so much notice of them ; for I wish to talk with you about this unique people, and, in fact to ask, what you, as an infidel, make of the Jews ? Nay, do not look shy at them, and do not put me off with merely saying, " I do not know what to make of them ;" for you who talk so boldly upon other subjects, where a little more modesty and reserve would be more becoming, should not be struck dumb, by the simple question, what do you make of the Jews ? I want nothing but a fair answer, and those who deny that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are a revelation from God, should be able to solve the difficulty which arises from the existence of the Jews.

If you say, " I do not know what to make of them, and in fact, neither think nor care at all about them ;" you cannot expect that we should be satisfied with this answer. For you *ought* to know what to make of them, upon infidel principles ; and you confess that their embarrassing peculiarities have compelled you to think about them. No man, with an active bold mind, such as an infidel prides himself upon displaying, can have seen a Jew, without having had some secret surmises upon the subject. You will not wonder, therefore, that we think we know the reason why you do not like to talk about them ; and that, for this very reason, we do not

choose to be put off without an answer. For you are bound as an infidel to account for the Jews, for their existence and for their peculiarities, both in history and in religion. They are the witnesses which we Christians bring into court, to prove all those guilty of defamation, who call the religion of the Bible an imposture. You must fairly meet and fully confute my witnesses, or any honest jury, composed of twelve good men and true, will give their verdict against you.

You have often told us, that we Christians send you back to old musty records, to prove our religion true, and that your religion is in the living face of nature. You say, "Look round upon the heavens and the earth, and behold our Bible." Well, then, you should at least meet us boldly, when *we* appeal to living records, and pointing to the Jews, say, "Behold the unsuspected, because unwilling witnesses, of the truth of our religion." We have here millions of living witnesses, scattered through all countries, to bear witness, in every court, and to proclaim, in the language of every nation, the truth of the Bible. There they are, living, breathing, walking, speaking, meeting your eye, at the corner of every street, and, if you are a reflecting man, compelling you to start, and say, "That is the people of which the Bible speaks." If you are not an infidel, as a brute is an infidel, because he neither knows nor cares about truth or falsehood, you must often say to yourself, "This strange people are dogging me every where, and forcing me to say, 'Perhaps that Book which gives the only account of their origin and history, may, after all, prove true.'"

But your countenance indicates that your courage is reviving, and you are preparing a bold reply. You repeat Paine's dashing sophism, and attempt to pass it off for truth. "Christians appeal to the Jews in proof of their religion, and the Jews

say it is false ; this is, as if I should call a servant to confirm what I assert, and when he comes, he says it is a lie." But Christians are too much accustomed to investigate truth and distinguish it from falsehood, to be put off with a bad joke for a good argument. We do not appeal to the testimony of the Jews, but to their existence. It is not what they say, but what they are, that forms our argument. We are not such fools as to ask them whether our religion is true ; for if they believed it true, they would no longer be Jews, properly speaking, but Christians. The fair statement, or illustration, then, would be this—you and I dispute whether my servant is alive or dead. You say he has been dead many years ; and there is no such person in existence now : I say he is alive and at hand. To settle the dispute, I appeal to himself, and say, "Come here." If when he comes, he should take the part of my adversary, and say, "I am not alive but dead ;" he would still prove my assertion. It is enough for me, that he can come and speak at all ; it signifies nothing to my argument what he says. But when we have spoiled the joke and demolished the argument, we have not done with the subject.

For suppose we say, we do not appeal to the Jews, to shew the truth of the New Testament and the Christian religion, but to prove the divinity of the Old Testament and of the ancient Jewish faith: then the sophism of Paine would not apply; for the Jews do not, of course, say that their own religion is false. Here, then, you cannot substitute a joke for an argument.

All those among the Jews, that think at all, know well, that there is no answering the evidences of their religion, and that their sacred writings are too well attested to be considered counterfeits. There are Jews who are like too many that are called Christians, and who are so in love with the present

world, and so intent upon earthly gain, or pleasure, that they are deistical from mere carelessness, or secret alienation from a religion which demands the heart for God. But that is a sort of infidelity which, as it is not founded in argument, is not to be confuted by argument. This is a disease of the heart, and in vain you attack it by remedies calculated to cure the disorders of the head: sickness, or the approach of death, and above all, the grace of God, rendering the mind serious and honest, are the true remedies for this infidel temper.

But, perhaps you will say, "Well, if the Jews do believe their religion true, that will not prove Christianity; for the two religions are independent, as the separate existence of Jews and Christians proves." Yes, the truth of the Jewish religion does prove that of the Christian. No man who sincerely believes the Hebrew Scriptures to be divine, can bend his mind seriously to the subject, and give an impartial hearing to the argument, without perceiving the divinity of the Christian religion. This I shall have occasion to touch upon again; but at present, I have said enough to expose the artful sophistry of Paine, who knows well how to deceive, and to make men fancy they are convinced, because they feel themselves compelled to laugh. Many love laughing better than arguing, and think it better to be merry than wise: but remember death is coming, and that is no joke.

Again, therefore, we ask, what can infidels say, when we point to the Jews? Perhaps you will try another evasion, and say, "If the Jews believe their religion true, that is no reason why *I* should. If they are credulous fools, I know better than to suffer myself to be thus deceived." Hitherto we have heard of the Jews, not as too credulous, but as obstinate unbelievers. "As unbelieving as a Jew," is a proverbial saying. But this is not our business at present. We are not to be put off thus. We again declare, that we

do not appeal to the belief of the Jews, but to their *existence*. We do not ask you to give credit to their Bible, because they do ; but to believe it, because they are here, the living witnesses of its truth. If you refuse, we ask again, how do you account for the existence of the Jews, with all the peculiarities of their history ?

These are the very people of whom the Bible speaks, as having been chosen of God, to be the depositaries of divine revelation, and to preserve the knowledge of the one living and true God ; when all other nations were worshipping senseless blocks. As they are described in the Bible, they are so peculiar, so utterly unlike all other people, that infidels would be ready to say, there never was such a people, and never could have been : none but credulous fools could believe the strange story of such a nation. But here they are ; deny it if you can. Here they are, with their Bible in their hands ; that same Hebrew Bible that was given them by Moses and the prophets.

When, therefore, you say, “ If Christ and his apostles, gave sufficient proofs of the truth of the Christian religion, why did not the Jews believe in Jesus ? ” We answer, “ Multitudes of them did. ” All the first Christian churches were composed of converted Jews, who lived on the very spot, and at the very time of which the records of the Christian miracles speak ; and these converts suffered the utmost persecutions from their unbelieving countrymen. All the apostles were converted Jews. “ Then why did not the rest believe ? ” you ask. There is enough in the temper of the present Jews, and of infidels too, to answer that question in one way ; and that is a way so painful that I will not now dwell on it : but another answer may be given.— They were suffered to remain in unbelief, to be a standing argument against infidels. For if all the Jews had believed, they would have melted down

into the common mass of Christians ; all distinction between Jew and Gentile would have been lost, and infidels would have said, " There never was such a nation as the Jews of whom the Bible speaks, and none but fools would believe the incredible tale, any more than we now believe in pigmies, or in fairies." But here are the Jews with their Bible in their hand. Deny it who can.

These living witnesses present themselves to confront infidels in every land. We have them in England, as every child knows. They are in France also, and they attracted the attention of Buonaparte, who convened a grand assembly of them in Paris, to accomplish some political scheme, which has never yet been developed. Jews abound in Holland ; for one quarter of Amsterdam, the capital, is inhabited by them. They form a large part of the inhabitants of Spain, though, on account of the religious persecutions of that country, they often exist in secret, where they are little suspected. In Germany, they are numerous, and learned, and powerful. Whole towns and districts, in Poland, are inhabited by Jews, who are said to form more than a million of the population, and to have lately joined in arms for the recovery of the liberty of that oppressed people. In the Turkish empire, they abound. They are found in the East and West Indies, and in the vast continent of America. And in fact where are they not ?

Every where, they are the same peculiar people. Every where, by fulfilling, they prove the inspiration of the words of Scripture, uttered four thousand years ago : " The people shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations." Every where they have the same ancient language, and the same sacred books ; the same singular rites ; and are looking for the same grand event, the coming of some great deliverer, to gather them from their dis-



persion, and restore them to the land of their fathers.

For that people, that is found every where, and at home no where, was once a most compact and powerful nation, in a fine country of their own. Ask them where it was, and they will tell you. It was on the borders of the Mediterranean sea; bounded on the north by the mountains of Lebanon well known for its lofty cedars; on the south, by Egypt, the country from which they were brought forth by mighty miracles; on the east, by the famous river Euphrates; and by the Levant, or Mediterranean, on the west. You see they did not live in a *terra incognita*, a land in the moon, or a region which cannot be found. It is a country as well known as England.

And why are they not there now? Ah, that is a question well worthy of rational inquirers after truth. How long have they been driven out of that land, and scattered into every nation under heaven? Almost two thousand years, as the history of England, and of almost every European nation, will shew. Moses, their lawgiver, told them, about four thousand years ago, that if they did not obey the law he gave them from God, they should be driven out into every nation under heaven; and Jesus warned them, that if they did not believe in him, the Romans would come and destroy their capital city, Jerusalem, and their national existence, so that others should possess their land, and they should be dispersed in all other lands.

But infidels may say, "How do we know that they have been dispersed so long, or that they ever lived in Palestine, which is called the holy land?" You may easily know that, and thoroughly satisfy yourselves, if you choose to inquire. Read the history of Europe, and you must become familiar with what are called the Crusades, in which our

Richard I. called Cœur de Lion, or lion's heart, was so deeply engaged. These wars were undertaken to recover the holy land, in which Jesus lived, among his own nation of the Jews, from the power of the Mahometans, who still have possession of it. This carries us back almost a thousand years, and shews that the Jews have been dispersed so long. But many, who are not familiar with history, know something of Shakespeare, and are well acquainted with his character of Shylock the Jew. This is sufficient to shew that Jews were well known in the age of which the poet speaks; and that they were then dispersed in various countries, and were living in Venice; for Shakespeare, it is well known, has adapted his characters to historic facts. The history of our own country, in the times of the Henrys and Edwards, often records the persecutions which the Jews suffered in England, whenever a needy king wished to strip them of the wealth which they acquired by trading in all lands. All other history presents similar facts; so that you might as well doubt whether there are gentiles now, as question whether there have been Jews, from the time of Jesus Christ, down to the present day. When you go back to the Roman history, you read of the war in which Vespasian and Titus his son, destroyed the Jewish nation, and commenced its dispersion. Tacitus, the well known Roman historian, tells us how Pompey first subdued the Jews and entered into their temple, where he found, to his surprise, no image of a god. During the civil wars of the Romans, Judea fell to the lot of Mark Antony, who gave the kingdom to Herod, whom Augustus still farther favoured. While Tiberius reigned they were quiet, and it was in his reign that Christ was crucified; but when Cæsar attempted to set up his image in the temple, the Jews took up arms.

Judea was afterwards reduced to a Roman province, which Antonius Felix governed with cruelty.

The patience of the Jews lasted, until Gessius Florus governed the country, and then war broke out. But Vespasian, in two summers, conquered all the country except Jerusalem. The temple was a sort of citadel, but at length there were prodigies which some interpreted as if the deities had left the temple, but others put a different construction on them; for it was supposed that a prediction was contained in their ancient sacred writings, that the East should rule, and that some who should spring from Judea should have universal empire. A hope of the Messiah urged on the Jews, while the Romans applying the prediction to their commanders, pressed the siege till the city fell.—*Tacit. Annal. lib. 5, cap. 9—13.*

The Roman generals were accustomed, when they had conquered a country, to return home in triumph. On these triumphs immense sums were squandered. Lofty arches were erected, that under them the victors might enter into Rome. Of these, there still remains one that was constructed to celebrate the triumphant return of Titus from the Jewish war. This arch contains sculpture which exhibits the triumphal procession. There you may see the Roman soldiers carrying on their shoulders the golden candlestick and the golden table of shew-bread, and other vessels of the temple at Jerusalem, which are described in the Bible, as made by Moses, at the command of God. The Jews are so mortified at this monument of their defeat and dispersion, that they will not go under the arch, but enter into Rome through a little door at the side, like that which once opened into the foot-path, at the side of the arch of Temple Bar, under which our kings enter into the city.

Drawings of this arch of Titus may be seen, with the sculpture representing the procession, and the golden trumpets and candlestick, and table. These are memorials of the truth of the Old Testament, shewing that the things described in the

books of Moses, were really used in the worship of the Jews. Now it cannot be pretended that this arch of Titus is a contrivance of the Roman catholics, to give countenance to their religion ; for Rome was pagan when this arch was erected. Nothing like it has been constructed since the Christian religion triumphed over the idol gods of ancient Rome.

As Tacitus, the Roman annalist, records the last war in which the Jewish nation sunk under the iron rod of the great conquerors of the world ; so Josephus, a Jewish historian, who wrote in Greek, gives a full and striking detail of the events of the war, and the unparalleled sufferings which it inflicted on the Jews. Thus, a work written by a Jew, furnishes a most astonishing proof of the fulfilment of that prophecy of divine vengeance, uttered by Jesus, when he was led out of the gates of Jerusalem to be crucified. In fact, a man must reject all history, and be a universal sceptic, or else forfeit all claim to candour or consistency, if he refuse to believe that the Jews did live as a nation, in Judea, in the time of which the gospels speak ; that they were soon after expelled that country by the Romans ; and that they have, ever since, been scattered over the world.

We have now traced up the Jews by a clear testimony from universal history, to the time when they lived in Palestine ; we have found, at Rome, the monuments of the destruction of their capital city, Jerusalem, where stood their famous temple, on account of which the neighbouring Arabs still call the city, which has been since built there, Al Kadosh, " the holy."

There you may go and see the same natural unchangeable features of the country as are described in the Bible. In that land you will see, on the north, mount Lebanon, with its cedars. On the west, you may behold the river Jordan, which Israel

crossed without bridges or boats, when that nation came to take possession of the land. Towards the head of that river, is the lake of Geneseret, on the banks of which Jesus preached, and where he performed many of his mighty works. Beyond the Jordan, and towards the south, is that vast dreary desert, where the whole nation lived forty years, though they must have perished in as many days, unless they had been sustained by miracle. There mount Sinai, on which the law was delivered, rears its rugged head, amidst the waste howling wilderness. That mount Zion, on which the city of David stood, stands there still ; though the family of David no more reigns upon earth. These striking features of nature are everlasting monuments of the truth of that book which makes so many references to them, of so minute and circumstantial a kind, and in such connexions, that, if the book were not true, the imposture could not escape detection.

If you wish to see this illustrated by contrast, read the Koran of Mahomet, which contains many plagiarisms, and continued allusions to the history of the Bible ; but is so vague and indefinite, that you feel yourself in a mist, and yet the proofs of imposture are every where obvious. Now, you should recollect, that the Jews lived in their own country hundreds of years, and, during all that time, were called to practise the rites of a religion that referred them to the monuments of its truth, which presented themselves to view on every hand

But this people, whose land is frequently visited by travellers, and whose history is interwoven with the records of nations, own that they crucified Jesus, and they glory in it. Thus they pour contempt on Volney, who, in his work on the ruins of empires, pretends to call in question the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ. This French infidel thought perhaps of nothing more than a *jeu d'esprit*, or a

trial of skill, when he represented Christ and his twelve apostles as a personification of the sun, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. He probably never expected to find any one fool enough seriously to believe, in defiance of the history of astronomy and of nations, what he threw off in sport, as a mere sky rocket.

Instead of the heavenly bodies giving rise to the belief of the existence of certain beings, it was the belief of the existence of the individuals that occasioned their names to be given to the luminaries. Men first worshipped a celebrated beauty, whom they supposed to be a deity, and long afterwards her name was given to that most beautiful planet which we call Venus.

Will the followers of Volney's whimsical theory say, there never was a king called George, in our country, but that this notion sprang from the most distant planet, which we call the *Georgium Sidus*? Or, that there never was an astronomer of the name of Herschel; for this is but a personification of the planet which foreigners call by that name. Will they tell us, that there never was such a king as Charles, or such a tree as the oak, but that the southern constellation called *Robur carolinum*, or the royal oak, gave rise to the false notion of the existence both of the king and of the tree?

But who does not see that such fancies as these will never be suffered, by men of sense or veracity, to contradict the testimony of history and reason. The Jews, the Jews, will confute all this nonsense. For, if infidels say that Christians invented the story of Jesus and his apostles, by personifying the sun and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the Jews will say, "No, no; if Christians had invented the story we never should have adopted it. Our history proves there was such a person as Jesus. He was an apostate Jew, who pretended to be our Messiah, the Son of God, and our fathers crucified him for blas

phemy." The Jews, then, are living witnesses to the truth of all the great facts recorded in divine revelation. Lardner, one of the most calm, dispassionate, accurate and laborious of writers, has ransacked ancient literature, and produced a host of contemporary witnesses, Greek and Roman, Jew, Pagan and Christian, to shew beyond the reach of contradiction, that the whole history of revelation is minutely true. Go, infidel, read Lardner, he gives the very words, in the original, and refers to the book, and chapter, and section, of all the ancient writers whom he quotes, in verification of the historic truth of Scripture.

We again ask, therefore, what can you make of the Jews? You reject their history as fabulous, utterly out of the whole course of nature, and say, "A man must have a monstrous appetite for the marvellous, to credit the history of such a nation." Well, but here they are. Look at them. You say, "We have looked again and again, and cannot tell what to make of them." You own, then, that they are singular, and like no other people on the face of the earth. They live in Duke's-place, as so many foreigners. Multitudes of them, who were born in this country, are more completely foreigners than many who were born in other countries, but have lived here some years.

The French Protestants who fled to this country, at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, about two hundred years ago, and brought the silk manufacture to Spitalfields, where they settled, have now melted away into the general mass of our countrymen. They married into English families, and their descendants can scarcely be traced; for they have lost their language, and many other English people speak French, of which they know nothing. This French emigration is already like the waters of a river, which has mingled with the ocean, and can be distinguished no more.



Our nation consists of descendants from the ancient Britons; from the Romans, who conquered these Aborigines; from the Saxons, who came over from the Dutch coast; from the Danes, and from the Normans, who conquered us under William I. But these are so melted into one undistinguishable mass, that it is said, "a true born Englishman is a contradiction." Yet here are the Jews, as distinct as ever; and not only here, but, in all other countries, they have remained a separate people, for almost eighteen hundred years. They keep up the use of the Hebrew tongue, a language singular and difficult, and utterly unlike all modern tongues. They use this alone in their worship. They teach it to their children. They maintain their grand national distinctions, as if they were never to be lost; and, for aught that appears to the contrary, they will go on, in this way, while the world lasts.

But infidels are not likely to know the Jews so intimately as the Christians do; for we have stronger motives for studying, and you for neglecting them. Yet, if you seek nothing but truth, you must say I will study this phenomenon among my species, "*Homo sum et nihil humani a me alienum puto.*" I should be ashamed, as a reflecting man, to say I had never thought about the most singular people on the face of the globe. As a Deist, I should be doubly ashamed; and I should fear lest every one who encountered me should say, "If you have never bent your attention to this subject, your infidelity is the mere result of thoughtless stupidity; or your unbelief is the consequence of some secret guilty cause, which makes you afraid to find the Bible true; and therefore you are afraid to look a Jew in the face, lest the sight of him should wake up your conscience to say, with the voice of thunder, What if the Bible should after all prove true?"

Come, you may as well face them, for you cannot avoid seeing them. What multitudes of them walk

the streets in their gay attire, as the summer advances ! What is the reason ? They are then keeping the feast, or the holiday, by which they celebrate the giving of the law on mount Sinai. “Ah !” you exclaim, “that astounding story ! A whole nation gathered in a desert, to hear the voice of Deity speaking with articulate sounds, in the language of man, and giving that law which they call the ten commandments ! This is what we cannot bear to think of ; for it is urged upon us as one of these miracles of revelation in which there could be no imposture.”

But, when the summer is past, and this feast gone by, your eyes, or your conscience, are not much relieved. For, every week, you see, on Saturday, the Jews going about in gala dress ; though, to others this is the busiest day in the week. Ask them the cause : they will tell you, “We are obeying the law given on mount Sinai, where Jehovah said to our fathers, Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it, thou shalt do no manner of work.” With all their love of gain, therefore, they withdraw from business on this busy day ; and are, in addition to this, obliged to live comparatively idle, on the next day ; because the law of our land prohibits business, on the Lord’s-day, or first day of the week.

What could have induced a people notorious for love of gain to make such sacrifices ? What but a conviction that the law was divine ? No human law compels them to keep their own sabbath ; for they have no king or government of their own. No established priesthood obliges them, for they have no priests ; though, by a vulgar error, we speak of their priests and of their high priests, but these are merely rabbies, or learned men. Among them, no man can be a priest who cannot prove his descent from Aaron, and as no one can do that, they abstain

from pretending to have any priest at all. But if they had any, these could have no power to enforce the observance of their sabbath, in a country where the law recognizes no sabbath but the Christian. Nothing but a conviction that their law was given from heaven induces them to keep their own sabbath, where they are obliged, in some measure, to keep ours too.

You see them go about in great numbers, at the time of passover, at the season which we call Easter. They abstain from business, for many days, they dress in their gayest clothes, and feast on peculiar provisions. Then you see in the shops what are called Jew's cakes, or passover cakes ; made of flour and water, and pierced with little holes. This is the only kind of bread they eat, during all the time of this feast ; for nothing that has leaven or yeast in it will they touch, or suffer to remain in their houses, at that season. Go to their synagogues when the passover begins, and you will see their most sacred assemblies. Enter their houses, and you will find a paschal supper of roast lamb provided.

If you ask, what means all this ? They will tell you, " Our fathers were slaves in Egypt, and when their oppressors refused to let them go, God smote the first-born in every house, but gave us a means of security, amidst the wide wasting destruction ; for He charged us to kill a lamb, and sprinkle its blood upon our door-posts, and assemble all our family in our house, to eat of the flesh ; that, when the angel of death passed through the land, to smite the Egyptians, the blood on our<sup>1</sup> doors might be a sign that he had no commission there, for all in that house were to be spared. And as our smitten and frightened foes hurried us out of their land that night, we had not time to leaven our bread, and prepare it in the usual manner, but were obliged to carry it, mere dough, of flour and water ; so he enjoined us, ever

after, to eat unleavened bread, at this season, as a memorial of this national deliverance."

But you cry, "Ah! that is the strange tale we read of in the Bible!" For that very reason we sent you to see it exemplified, that you might know it was not a mere dead letter, but is still a living practice; and that a nation actually existing is now doing the very thing which God commanded the Jews to do. Go, ask the Jew why he does this? He will tell you, I received it from my fathers: I should never have thought of doing so, if I had not. *They* will tell you they received it from *their* fathers, and so on in unbroken succession, till you come to the time, when, if the whole story had not been true, the practice never could have been introduced.

The revolution in 1688, when king William landed, and James the second fled, has often been celebrated in this country. But, if you ask any one, who invented such a story? he would exclaim, invented! *I* never invented it! I found it, when I came into the world; my fathers celebrated it, but they did not invent it, they received it from their fathers; and we can trace it back, in this way, by an unbroken succession of facts, to the very time when the revolution happened. There are also collateral facts which confirm it. You may go to Ireland, and there you will hear enough of the immortal memory of William III., and see enough of the orange ribbon, the colour of that Prince of Orange. But, in this case, it is thought superfluous, absolutely idle, to give laboured proofs of the event; for every man of common sense sees, at the first blush, that a nation could never have been brought to commemorate what never occurred. This is strengthened by the consideration that a religious service has been appointed, and an office inserted in the common prayer book, to render an annual acknowledgement to God for the glorious revolution of 1688. The

commemoration never could have been introduced, if there had been no such revolution.

But, strong as this case is, the argument from the Jewish passover is far stronger. For multitudes of Englishmen, in 1688, took the whole affair upon credit, and never saw king William, or one soldier of his army. But every Jew was called, at first, to celebrate an event, of which he was not only an eye-witness, but a subject too. Each one must have known whether he had been in Egypt or not, and whether he had passed the Red Sea on foot. The history of the Exodus declares, that the Jews ate passover cakes of flour and water, at first, from necessity; because they went out of Egypt in such a hurry, that they could not make common bread; and, they were commanded to do this every year after, on pain of death. If, therefore, there ever had been a period when this practice had not been known, it would have exposed the whole story to ridicule and contempt.

Now, I perceive by your looks, that you are rack-  
ing your invention to find an answer, and devise a way to get out of this difficulty. Well, think on—the more you think, the better I like it. There is nothing of which I am so much afraid, as your talking without thinking, or turning away, and saying, “I will neither think nor care about the matter.” The more you think, the more you will feel yourselves compelled to say, “I know not what to make of these cunning Jews; they perfectly confound me. I shall be afraid to look them in the face, lest they should compel me to blush for my infidelity.”

But now the change in your looks, and your brightening countenance, seem to bespeak some new and bright thought, to help you out of your difficulty. Well, let us have it. You exclaim, with triumph, “If I should be obliged to admit that the existence of the Jews, with all their peculiarities, is a living witness to the truth of their religion, it is no proof

of the truth of yours : if it proves the truth of the Old Testament, that does not include the New." Well, if I admit your reply, in all its extent, it includes a proof that Deism is false. You say, that God never gave any revelation to man, but has left us all to the light of nature ; and here you are compelled to admit, that there is a whole nation of living witnesses to the truth of a revelation from heaven. Never, therefore, must you utter another word against revelation, till you can tell what to make of the Jews.

But I have another word to say to you on this subject. If you cannot confront my witnesses, nor deny the divinity and truth of the Jews' religion, and of the Old Testament, in which it is contained, you must, for the love of truth and consistency, as an honest man, become a Jew, and worship the God of Abraham. Nay, do not laugh, nor exclaim, "What ! I go to the synagogue ! no, never." Why not ? If you love truth, as you boast of doing, you will follow her wherever she may lead, even though it should be to the synagogue. Any truth, however humbling, is better than any error, however proud. To settle down into a firm belief of the Old Testament, is preferable to being tossed in everlasting scepticism. You will find it happier far, to let your mind repose in something that is true, as far as it goes, than to be tossed in the limbo of vanity .

Of all things transitory and vain,  
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mix'd.

But, before I drive this nail as far as it will go, I would again intreat you to think a little more about the Jews. Did you ever see their Bible ? It is in a very singular language, which is not now spoken in any country, or by any people under heaven. What is called Hebrew, as *spoken* by the Jews, is a mere gibberish, composed of other languages, with a slight sprinkling of Hebrew words.

Their Bible is the only book of pure Hebrew in existence. Is not this a singular fact? Here is a people that had the knowledge of letters, hundreds of years before the surrounding nations, and whose oldest history is a thousand years more ancient than that of Herodotus, the father of profane history, and yet the only monument of their literature in existence is that book which they esteem divine. Does not this intimate, that they guarded it with especial care; so that it remains, when all their other books have perished? The language has all the marks of the simplicity of an original tongue; not derived from any other, as our English language is, from the Saxon and the Norman French, and as the Italian is from the Latin. The only living language which resembles it is the Arabic; and the Arabs are known to be a most ancient nation, which had a kindred origin with the Jews, to whom they were near neighbours. The most famous Arabic work, the Koran, of Mahomet, composed about six hundred years after the setting up of the Christian religion, admits the truth of the Jewish history, and confirms, while it perverts, all the great facts of Scripture. But if I could only persuade you honestly to follow truth, even though it should make you a Jew, I should then hope soon to make you a Christian too. For the sacred books of the Jews prove the religion of the Christians to be divine. You often shoot with a long bow, and speaking in the gross, without reflecting on particulars, assert that the whole Scriptures are inventions of the Christian priests. But, go, consult the Jews, and they will convince you that their sacred books are not the invention of Christians. The Jews would not read in their synagogues any thing that came from a follower of Jesus, whom they pronounce accursed. And they can prove to you, that their Scriptures were known and read in their synagogues, long before the Christian religion existed.



There is a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, called the Septuagint, or Seventy, from the supposition that it was the work of seventy translators. This is known to have existed before the New Testament was written; and as soon as the Christian religion was introduced into the Roman empire, the Septuagint was translated into Latin, that the Christians who spoke that tongue might have the benefit of reading it. Other translations of the Old Testament into ancient languages, that are now no where spoken, attest the high antiquity of the Jewish Scriptures, and prove superabundantly that they are no modern invention. The same fact is proved by the Samaritan Pentateuch.

Now the Jews, who bitterly hate the religion of Christ, and would more willingly invent things to prove it false than to prove it true, carry about with them, into all nations, the books which contain a complete demonstration of the Christian faith. These books show that they, from their earliest era, expected a great deliverer, whom they call Messiah, or the Anointed One. A slight inspection will show, that they had a right to expect such a personage. They still expect him. This they call the hope of Israel. The Messiah was to come at a certain time; and we Christians can show that this time is now past; which is indeed so obvious, that it is confessed even by Jews. You ask, "How do they account for it, then?" They say, the time is deferred, on account of their sins; and Messiah delays his coming, till they shall be found worthy of receiving him. But, perhaps you say, "At that rate, he may never come, for we see no signs of any alteration in the Jews." Well, we Christians think that God did not defer the coming of the Messiah; but when "the fulness of the time was come, sent him forth, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us who were under the law." For Christians think, that Jesus

Christ was the person promised. He came, at the time fixed for this event, before the sceptre of national dominion had passed away from the Jews, and as soon after the re-building of Jerusalem as Daniel had foretold. Jesus bore all the marks of the person promised. He was born in the Holy Land, as Isaiah had predicted, and in the very town of Bethlehem, from which Micah, hundreds of years before, said the deliverer should come. He descended from Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob and Judah and David and Solomon, the exact genealogical line marked out for him. He answered to the character which the prophets had given, though it was made up of features which would previously have been thought contradictory, and therefore impossible to be found in one person. He was by birth the king of Israel, and yet a poor man; he was of most exalted rank and powers, yet meek, and lowly in his spirit and deportment; he conferred miraculous benefits on the people, as Isaiah had promised, though despised and rejected of men, as that prophet predicted. He was a Jew, condemned by Jews, though he was executed upon a cross, the Roman mode of punishment. They parted his garment among them, and for his vesture cast lots, as David predicted, though these two things seem contradictory; for if they divided the clothes into shares, why cast lots? But there was one seamless garment, which they thought a pity to rend and divide; for this, therefore, they cast lots, to determine who should have the whole. They gave him vinegar and gall to drink; and as it was predicted that not a bone of him should be broken, when they gave the *coup-de-grace* to two others, who were crucified with him, Jesus was passed by, on the conviction that he was dead already; but to make this quite sure, "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and forth-

with came thereout blood and water ; and he that saw it bore witness, that you might believe."

He made his grave with the wicked, being buried near Calvary, which was the place where criminals were executed ; but he was deposited with the rich, in his death, as Joseph, an honourable counsellor, lent him his own new tomb. But, according to his own prediction, Jesus rose, on the third day ; and his cause, far from being ruined by his crucifixion, derived from his cross its noblest triumphs : according to the prediction of Isaiah, " He shall divide the portion with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death." His appearance, life, and death, have created a new era in the world. No person that ever appeared in it, has had so powerful an influence on its fortunes. This influence is still increasing ; and, after the lapse of almost two thousand years, the name of Jesus is as fresh, as fragrant, as powerful, as victorious over barbarous and idolatrous nations, as when it was first uttered by the lips of man.

How do you account for the peculiarity of this one Jew, born in an obscure town, and executed as a criminal in a country on the borders of the Mediterranean, eighteen hundred years ago ? The predictions concerning him are in the hands of his own nation, scattered over the face of the earth : but they do not believe on him. Then you cannot say they invented these prophecies, to honour him. The predictions that meet and find their fulfilment in him, are numerous, various, minute, and such as, previously to their fulfilment, would have been thought contradictory, so that if one part of them came true, the other could not. How do you account for this ? For it becomes you, as honest thinking men, to have some solution for the enigma. If you say, the predictions were thrown out by accident, and found their fulfilment by chance ; what has been done

may be done again. Do you, then, throw out some prediction of a great personage that shall come into the world ; let another tell when he shall be born ; a third, where ; let a fourth describe his person and character ; a fifth, tell the works he shall perform ; a sixth, describe the death he shall die, with the dying words he shall utter, and the mockeries he shall endure ; a seventh, tell the triumphs he shall afterwards enjoy, and the revolutions he shall create in the world. Then, leave it to chance to produce a person in whom all these predictions shall be fulfilled. But I see you decline my offer, and have no inclination to have your own solution of the difficulty brought to a test so severe : yet why not, if your solution be true ?

You exclaim, “ I see whither you are driving us, but we are not disposed to go so fast ; for we have thought of a difficulty which perhaps may puzzle *you*. Christians say, the History of Jesus, this singular Jew, was written by his disciples, who were themselves Jews, and so was the rest of the New Testament. Then why was it not written in Hebrew, as the Old Testament was ? Instead of this, the Christian scriptures were written in Greek. Is not that a sign that the whole story was false ? ” No ; quite the reverse. If the New Testament had been written in the same language as the Old, then it would have created suspicion of falsehood ; for the pure Hebrew, in which Moses and the prophets wrote, had become a dead language, ages before the apostles penned the gospels and epistles. When the Jews were, for their idolatry, driven captives to Babylon, seventy years spent there, broke the force and spoiled the purity of their tongue, by mingling it with a foreign dialect. And when the Syrian captains, who succeeded Alexander in the government of the neighbouring kingdoms, tyrannized over the Jews, the Syriac language forced its way among

them, and at length superseded the Hebrew, as a living tongue.

You reply, "If this was a good reason why the New Testament should not have been written in Hebrew, since that had become a dead language, it is no reason why it should have been written in Greek. Why was it not composed in the Syriac, which the Jews had adopted, just as books now published in Italy are written in Italian, which has superseded Latin, the ancient language of that country?" Because the New Testament was designed for universal use; and the Syriac was a language of very limited application. But the Greek was then what French is now, a tongue with which a man might travel over a great part of the world. The Jews themselves, who lived in the countries around Judea, spoke Greek, in which they had a version of their Scriptures, just mentioned under the title of the Septuagint. Greek was, in many important respects, the best language in which books intended for all nations and ages, could have been written.

"Now I have caught you!" the infidel exclaims. "You say the apostles, who were Jews, whose native tongue was oriental, a dialect of the Hebrew, wrote in Greek; how should those fishermen know Greek?" They declare that their master gave them, by miracle, the knowledge of all the languages of the nations among whom they were to go to preach his gospel. Among these, therefore, must be found Greek, the most useful, because the most widely diffused speech.

"Well, if you have escaped us again," the infidel replies, "we think we have now discovered an argument against the New Testament, which you will find it hard to answer. The apostles, then, wrote Greek as an Englishman would French, or a Frenchman, English. Now tell us, frankly,

whether there are any marks of this in the Greek of the New Testament?" There are. This, which is one of the most difficult peculiarities to imitate, strongly marks the language of the Christian Scriptures. Here two persons are required as judges, one who knows the native tongue of the writer, and the other who can judge of the perfect purity of that in which the book is written. If an Englishman writes in French, another Englishman who knows something of French, will perceive the marks of a native Englishman; and a Frenchman who may not understand English, will discover that it is not the language of a native of France. Apply this test to the New Testament. Let a Greek scholar, familiar with none but pure Greek, read the New Testament, (for he will be able,) and he will immediately pronounce it not the production of a native Greek. Then let a Jew who understands Greek read it, and he will tell you, it must have been written by Jews. This then is exactly what the New Testament says of itself.

This, however, is a peculiarity most difficult to be counterfeited. If you doubt it, try the experiment, and attempt to speak English as a Frenchman would; and a Frenchman who understands English will soon detect you. Let the Frenchman try to speak his language like an Englishman, and if you understand French you will soon discover his failure. But we have a peculiar advantage for ascertaining whether the New Testament was written by native Jews in Greek; for we have another book in exactly the same predicament—the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Now compare the two books, the Septuagint and the New Testament: and you will find that they are the only two books in the world which agree in this grand peculiarity, of bearing marks of native Jews writing in Greek.

This is a sort of accidental sign of veracity; of which an impostor would scarcely have thought;

and if a person were to think of it, he would find it very hard to surmount the difficulty. Is it not then manifest, that the Jews furnish, on every hand, proofs of the truth of Scripture which no man can answer?

But this is not all. Christianity says the Jews are yet to be converted to the Christian faith; that though they did not believe the Gospel at first, they shall at last. Rom. xi. 25—29.

Is it not manifest that, for this, there is a provision of a very singular kind, in their preservation as a distinct people? For, if they had melted down among the gentile nations, how could their conversion have been known? Suppose, for instance, any one were to say to you, the ancient or pure Britons shall one day rule this island again: would you not exclaim, "The Britons! where are they? How are they to be distinguished from Saxons, Danes, or Normans, or other races that have settled in our isle? They have not preserved their blood pure; but have so intermarried, that no one pretends to know the descendants of the ancient masters of our isle." But we all know the Jews. They are reserved to be made monuments of mercy.

And are not the signs of the times favourable to them? Does not providence present a smiling aspect indicative of approaching mercy? Formerly those who called themselves Christians bitterly hated and cruelly persecuted the Jews, for crucifying Jesus Christ; though he told us to love our enemies, and himself set the example by saying to his Apostles, "Go preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

What could such unchristian conduct, in the professed disciples of Christ, be expected to do upon the Jews, but to drive them farther off from Christ and from his cause? Can we wonder, then, at their obstinate unbelief, during all those ages in which nominal Christians were laying stumbling-blocks in



the way of the Jews? But now a better spirit is springing up in the breasts of Christians. Justice and kindness are succeeding to prejudice, hatred, and spite. We are seeking to deliver them from persecuting laws, which were passed against them, in a dark and barbarous age. And who needs to be told, what is likely to follow from this change of conduct in us? Will not the warm sun induce the traveller to throw off the cloak, which the keen and blustering wind caused him to wrap closer round him?

They have waited long for the Messiah. But will they always wait? Shall there be no end to their expectation? Will not hope deferred make the heart sick? May we not expect that they will, at length, begin to think, "Perhaps this person has already come, and we were so blind as not to see him? The same perversion of intellect and infatuation of heart which made our fathers forsake the sublime simplicity of our divine religion, for the abominable idolatries of the heathen, may have induced them also to prefer some false preconceptions concerning a worldly Messiah to the simple moral beauties of the anointed of God, when he came at the time foretold by the prophets. And, what if Jesus of Nazareth should, after all, prove to be Israel's hope and consolation? Heathen nations are now casting off their idol gods, because they have heard of the name of this Jesus. If things go on at this rate, for another century, there may not be a block of wood or stone adored as a god upon the face of the earth. And is it likely, that this grand event should be accomplished by the force of the name of Jesus, and by the zeal of those who adore him; and yet Jesus be that execrable deceiver that we have accounted him, and his disciples be the dupes of a gross imposture? Should we not rethink our thoughts?"

But with regard to the consequences of the conversion of the Jews, there is a difference among Christians; some of them believing that the nation

will be restored to its own land, and others that it will be amalgamated with the Christian church. Time will show who is right.

If they are to be restored, there are facilities provided for the accomplishment of this event. Though they will come from all nations, where they have spoken all languages, so that other inhabitants of those countries gathered into one, would make a perfect Babel, and must soon experience a second dispersion of Babel, the Jews are provided with a common language, that of the Old Testament. They learn from their infancy its characters and its sounds, they are familiar with its peculiar idioms, and they could by this means soon communicate, and worship together, on their arrival from all quarters of the earth, to the land of their fathers. Here, then, is a provision made for the gathering of Israel; such a provision as every reflecting mind must, to say the least, pronounce remarkable.

But if *they* are prepared; so is their land. Palestine, with the whole of Syria, has hitherto been under the power of the Roman Empire, which first crushed the Jewish nation, or of the Mahomedans, who propagated their religion by the sword! But the crescent now wanes before the cross. The sceptre of Mahomet is broken. The Turkish empire exists but by the sufferance of the European nations, who could, at any time, throw open the Holy Land to the seed of Abraham; as they have lately shown, at the battle of Navarino, when they said to the Turks, "Greece shall be free."

If, however, the Jews, when gathered to Christ, should not be restored to their own country, but should say of the Christian church, "this is our Holy Land;" and to Christians, "you are our people, we look for no better country, but the heavenly Canaan;" there is still a provision made for communication with each other, to announce the joyful events. I hold in my hand a Hebrew letter which I received from a Jew,

and which if he had sent to one of his own nation at Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Vienna, Moscow, Canton, New Holland, Rio Janeiro, or New York, would have been alike intelligible to all.

All that I have said of the Jews may be illustrated and confirmed by a recent fact. A person who had been brought up to the profession of the law, and had made, in a country town, an early and a flaming profession of religion, fell into sin, and having broken off all his religious connexions, came up to London, to study for the bar. Here he sought a creed that would suit his practice, and having read Voltaire's works, became an avowed infidel. He was, however, frequently thrown by circumstances into the company of a former Christian acquaintance. This person once asked him to take the lead, at a meeting called to consider of a petition for the emancipation of the Jews. To this the Barrister objected, saying, "My avowed infidelity may do you more harm than my co-operation can do you good." But his friend replied, "It is a civil object, that has no reference to religion, and if you will come to my house, I will introduce you to a Jew, with whom I think you will be pleased."

He consented and went. In the course of conversation, he said to his friend, "Now you are a Christian," and to the other, "You are a Jew. You do not, then, believe all that my friend here believes; that there was such a person as Jesus Christ." The Jew replied, "To be sure I do believe there was such a person as Jesus." "And that he was crucified?" said the Barrister. "Yes, certainly," replied the Jew. "And who crucified him, then?" "Why, my nation, to be sure, along with the Gentiles." "Do you believe, then," asked the Barrister, "that those books of the New Testament were written by such men as Matthew, and John, and Paul, and Peter?" "Yes," exclaimed the Jew, "They could have been written by none but such

men. None but a Jew could have penned these books, and a Jew well acquainted with the law." The Barrister was, of course, struck with this testimony from one who was not a Christian, but of a nation most hostile to the Christian faith. The Jew added, "Here I am, and my nation is scattered all over the world." "For what?" inquired the infidel. "For breaking the law which God gave to our fathers! He placed us amidst the nations, as witnesses for the true God, against idols; and instead of attending faithfully to this duty, we forsook him, and sunk into idolatry, and sensuality, and wars; and therefore he cast us off, and scattered us among the nations; and here we are, driven out among all people of the earth. For we must be subservient to the will of God, whether we will or not. For we are *now* witnesses for God to all nations upon the face of the earth; and the Jews are placed among the nations for that very purpose. Though we do not believe as the Christians do, we ought to be thankful for them. I have written to our principal Rabbi, to say to him, that we ought to bless God for the Christians; for they are doing what we ought to have done, making known the God of our fathers. For what a state the world would be in without religion! I cannot believe what the Christians do; for we are blind. But if I could believe as they do, I should think myself so happy, that I should be willing for the sake of their hopes, to have my right arm cut off."

The Christian asked, "And did not Moses your lawgiver tell you all this? that your condition would be exactly what you find it to be?" "Yes, certainly," replied the Jew: referring to the farewell sermon of Moses, Deut. xxx. 17, 18; xxxi. 16—19.

The Barrister, unable to endure this conversation, which waked up the remembrance of better days, looked at his watch and exclaimed, It is late, I

shall keep up my family at home. He went home, and in two months after died, bereft of the consolations which religion alone can afford.

Surely any infidel who is not absolutely inaccessible to reason might well say, these Jews have almost made me a Christian, and thus they have completely robbed me of my old argument, if the Christian religion is true, why did not the Jews believe it? I now feel as well as see, why. It was to stop the mouths of infidels. But what am I about? I am talking almost like a Christian.

Would God you were not merely almost but altogether like Christians, except in their defects, in which they are not like themselves, or rather not like their Lord. For remember, we entreat you, that, as the Jews were at first made witnesses for the true God against idolaters, and their seventy years' captivity in Babylon cured them of that sin, so they are now flaming monuments to the world, to warn them of the danger of rejecting Jesus Christ. Eighteen centuries almost they have cried with a voice of thunder, "he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Let me then as a friend entreat you to remember that this Jesus, who was of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and whom we believe to be over all God blessed for ever, said, when he stood at the bar, to be judged by the rulers of the Jews, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. For, behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Now consider, I entreat you, that it is at least possible that you may find at last that there is such a person, and that he is all that the Scriptures represent him to be. Should this be the case, where are

you, after despising and deriding him as an nonentity or an impostor?

You may say, we cannot believe there is any such person. But does not your heart sometimes misgive you? Is there no voice within that, in a solitary moment, whispers, "Perhaps there is such a one, and I may rue the consequences of my unbelief?" Is not the evidence sometimes stronger than you like to find it? Are you not often an unwilling auditor? Do you not turn a deaf ear to what can be said to prove Christ and the scriptures true, while you listen with open ears and an eager mind to every infidel objection? Is there not even a strong spice of enmity to the name and story of Jesus? And can this arise from any thing but an evil bias of heart? For what is there in the character, life, and death of Jesus that can justify dislike? Is there not all that should make you say, "What a lovely fiction! Oh that it were but true! As a human being and a lover of my species, what would I give, if I could but think that in my nature there existed one who presents such a combination of the lovely with the grand! What a happy delusion it must be that makes a man believe this is not merely the *beau ideal*, but a living reality, and this is my saviour and my friend! What a golden dream it must be to expect to spend eternity in the society and enjoyment of such a person."

If, instead of this, you spurn the idea, and scarcely refrain from sneers and reproaches, and blasphemy on the Saviour's name, can this be a mere error of the judgment? Must not the fault lie in the heart? And will not Jesus, if he be found really to be what the Scriptures represent him, treat your infidelity as a crime, and you as a personal enemy?

Can it avail you to allege in your excuse the

faults of his pretended friends? Is not every thing in them which provokes your wrath a manifest offence to him, a gross violation of his commands, and the very opposite of his own example? Are you not then condemned out of your own mouth and in your own conscience, when you pour your reproaches on him, for the sake of what is as unlike to him as darkness to light, or hell to heaven? Are you not conscious that your party, which you suppose to be right, often acts so as to make you blush for them, and would you not exclaim against the gross injustice of condemning you for their faults? Are you not bound, in honour and in reason, to separate the Saviour himself from all other beings whatever, and to examine his own claims upon your belief and attachment, saying, "Jesus Christ either is, or is not what the Scriptures say of him: whether others believe and obey him or not, I will examine his claims impartially, and treat him according to the evidence, as if there were no others in existence but him and me."

While you are conscious that your own temper and conduct are every thing that is the reverse of the candour and justice which he has a right to demand, may you not justly tremble at the thought of beholding his face, if you should see him coming at last to judge you and all the world? And may you not reasonably expect to join the cry of those who shall say, "ye rocks cover us and ye hills fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

Christians, you stand between the infidels and the Jews. Give glory to God who made you to differ from them both. For who maketh thee to differ? By the grace of God you are what you are. Upon yourselves therefore cast no vain glorious glances. But on those at either hand dart a look of pity. Pour out your benevolent intercessions for the con-



version of the Jews, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. And cease not to pray for infidels, that God may give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth, and that they may not stand confronted, confounded, and condemned, by the sight of the Jews, at the last dread day of doom.

# THE DISCUSSION

WHICH FOLLOWED

## THE SECOND LECTURE.

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Dr. Bennett.—The questions this evening will be expected to be on the subject of the Lecture.

Mr. Taylor.—Reverend Sir. I have paid most conscientious and respectful attention to your discourse. The very late time of the night will hinder me from pursuing that discourse regularly, and I respectfully request that I may have answers as succinct as the time calls for, to the respectful questions which I will submit.

Dr. Bennett. — The utmost assurance that I can give you is, that so far as I can trace the questions each one in order and see its direct bearing, I will reply to it with the utmost possible conciseness.

Mr. Taylor.—You opened your discourse by reading the 11th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which contained a sentiment——

Dr. Bennett. — Might I say, that is not the Lecture.

Mr. Taylor.—I will demonstrate that the pith of your argument turned on that. I beg it may be understood that I speak in a feeling of sincere respect. If I speak loud, and it should give a cadence I mean not, I entreat permission to make an apology.

Dr. Bennett.—It needs no apology : or I need the same apology myself, because I have spoken with an earnestness, that might not always appear respectful to those against whom I was arguing : I have the most perfect confidence in your respectful intentions, and shall by no means be disposed

to take it unkind, whatever vehemence of manner there may be.

The Chairman.—I would beg to impress upon the minds of the audience the propriety of not interrupting the discussion that is about to take place, by expressions of approbation or disapprobation.

Mr. Taylor.—The Reverend Lecturer spoke of infidelity as being a peculiar crime, and as exposing the person who is, what I am, an infidel, to the displeasure of the Almighty. The chapter with which he commenced the service explicitly and expressly stated that unbelief was acceptable to God, and the means of salvation to the unbelieving Jews. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

Dr. Bennett rose——

Mr. Taylor.—I will confine myself to the case of the Jews more especially. I declare, that reading the Bible as the word of God, from the beginning to the end, I am willing to abide the hazard at the day of judgment, that it is better to be an infidel than to be a believer.

Dr. Bennett. — You will admit, Mr. Taylor, that your statements are too long to have an interrogatory form; for no ordinary memory can take up your expressions and answer them one after another—to be able to do so a man must indeed be a prodigy with regard to memory. If you will put them into a small compass, I will answer them distinctly.

Mr. Taylor.—Can any compass be smaller than this in which I couch the first question? Where have you the first intimation of such a people as the Jews?

Dr. Bennett.—In the Holy Scriptures.

Mr. Taylor.—By the name of Jews?

Dr. Bennett.—The name of Jews does not occur early in their history, and for a very sufficient reason. The name Jew strictly applies to Ju-

aea, to the county—if we may speak in modern terms— or tribe of Judah. Originally it was but one of the twelve tribes, and therefore the whole country was not called Judea, nor were they called Jews. But after that the ten tribes had been carried away into captivity for their idolatry, there were but two tribes left, with a remnant of the Levites mixed up among them. The chief tribe of these two was that of Judah, which, being the royal tribe, and ruling over the country, of course gave its name to the whole. From hence the whole nation came to be called Jews, though originally they were called Israel, from Israel the name given to Jacob, from whom the whole nation descended.

Mr. Taylor.—The name Jews first occurs 2 Kings 16. 6, “At that time Rezin, king of Syria, recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the *Jews* from Elath; and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.” I ask why it is, that in the Gospel of St. John, the Jews are never spoken of as being inhabitants of Jerusalem, but are continually distinguished from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as Quakers, Socinians, or Arians might be among ourselves—the terms Jews and Israelites not being the designation of a nation, but of a religious sect.

Dr. Bennett.—Tacitus, whom I have quoted, calls them by the name of the Jews, not as a religious sect, but as the whole nation against which Titus and Vespasian waged war, and which nation he crushed and dispersed over the face of the earth. But again, I say, Ask the Jews, whether the name signifies only a religious sect, or whether it is not the name of their nation.

Mr. Taylor.—How is it, Sir, that Herodotus, Manetho, and all the authors quoted by Josephus, are utterly ignorant of the existence of such a people as the Jews? Homer, whose comprehensive mind left nothing unembraced, and who had visited Egypt,

was utterly ignorant of the existence of such a people as the Jews.

Dr. Bennett.—Were I to admit that Homer was ignorant of it, it would not at all serve the purpose of the questioner, because it is well known that there are many facts, of which the gentleman before me has no doubt, that Homer never mentions. He might as well say, If there are Antipodes, why did not Homer with his comprehensive mind mention them.

Mr. Taylor.—I have understood you to state that the argument for the existence of the Jews in a state of dispersion exists in this point—That the dispersion was a visitation—a punishment from God upon them for the crucifixion of Christ.

Dr. Bennett.—That was not the gist of my argument, but I am very happy now to approach it: for though I have answered the previous questions, as I wish to shew all courtesy and kindness when I am questioned, yet I must maintain that the previous questions did not come to my argument. My argument was, that the existence of the Jews is a living proof of the truth of their own Scriptures, and that their own Scriptures being proved true, prove the truth of our religion: and I have shewn how, from their own Scriptures, we may know that Jesus Christ is the promised Saviour, the hope of Israel, and the salvation of men.

Mr. Taylor.—My argument simply seeks instruction on the great question of the dispersion of the Jews. When did the dispersion take place; on which this argument ought to proceed?

Dr. Bennett.—It took place about 70 years, I think, after the crucifixion of Christ. You will recollect that in speaking in this impromptu way, and not being able to foresee what questions might be put to me, I cannot be expected to be accurate to a year in chronology. I can only give you a general idea, which I am perfectly conscious is true;

but I can be more accurate still. I have Tacitus in my pocket—the same writer I have quoted, and it would be easy to read his account. It is in the fifth book of his *Annals*, that he gives a description of the war, and it was from the date of that war that their dispersion took place, and they were scattered all over the world.

Mr. Taylor.—And that dispersion was a fulfilment of prophecy—the dispersion was a visitation from God upon them for rejecting their Messiah? That is the position which it is necessary I should bring you to, in order to the great demonstration at which I aim; namely, that the Jews never did exist as a nation, but the term Jew was a general name for a pious and devout man of any nation whatever.

Dr. Bennett.—All the history of the Greeks and Romans will deny that position. Josephus himself was a Jew, and he speaks of his *nation* the Jews, and not of a sect. Tacitus speaks of the Jews as he speaks of any other nation against whom Vespasian made war, and there is no way of proving any name to be the name of a nation, if the name of Jew does not. We might be told, perhaps, that the name of Englishman, is the name of a religious sect, because in some countries it may have that application. Where Englishmen are only known as missionaries—where they have gone and propagated the gospel, the name of Englishman and the name of Christian are almost identified in the people's minds. If a man be an Englishman, he is considered a Christian, and if a Christian, he is considered an Englishman; except in countries where intercourse with foreigners and navigators has taught them that those names are not synonymous.

Mr. Taylor.—I am sorry to find the authority of Tacitus, and pagan authors, little acquainted with the peculiarities of the Jewish religion, should be set up to overthrow the explicit declarations of the Jewish Scriptures themselves. The dispersion which

you speak of, from pagan authors, as having taking place subsequently to the crucifixion of Christ, at the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian, 70 years after that epocha, I find is stated in the book of Esther, and which is a book received as a divine communication, to have taken place 520 years before the birth of Christ. You will there read that Ahasuerus reigned from India and Ethiopia over an 127 provinces. In this book we have one of the first accounts of the Jews, "And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, there is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom." Those were the Jews, and therefore they were certainly not a national but a religious people. I read in the Acts of the Apostles—

Dr. Bennett.—I would beg to suggest to Mr. Taylor, that it would be better to divide his questions.

Mr. Taylor.—I am sure these are important truths, it would raise infidelity in your estimation if I could contrive to put them in the form of a question. In the Acts of the Apostles it is said, "There were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Is not that an indication that a Jew pointed out a religious character? I have a hundred texts like this; in the second chapter of the Romans we read, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly;" indicating that the character of a Jew was synonymous with what in common *parlance* would be called a pious man.

Dr. Bennett.—It must be obvious to the audience that here is quite enough to occupy a man for two hours in answering, and though the questioner has his notes, I have none. It is utterly impossible for me to give him an answer, unless he will be so kind as to go over his questions again, reducing them to sections, and will give me portion



by portion, and thus let me answer them portion by portion. I really cannot recollect all the questioner has said, and I doubt whether he himself can.

Mr. Taylor.—Yes, yes.

Dr. Bennett. — With regard, however, to one part of his statement in which he expressed his sorrow that I quoted from pagan authors, I should have been ashamed to quote from them, if I supposed that I was addressing a Christian audience. With those who profess to receive the Scriptures as a divine communication, these are my law and my testimony, and I say if we speak not according to these words, it is because there is no light in us. But is it wrong to quote profane authors when arguing with a person who, I presume, does not admit the truth of the Scriptures? I should have thought then, it would have been in vain to appeal to these books—though the questioner himself now appeals to them as if they were true. Well, but if you admit them true, there is no more controversy between us, and I rejoice in your conversion, and bless God for it.

Mr. Taylor.—I assure you it is not for argumentative victory—it is not for a display of talent, that I speak here, but to convey a knowledge of the objections to Christianity on which my public character is founded, and the private sentiments of one hundred thousand persons in this metropolis. The object I aim at is, if not to carry conviction to your minds, at least to produce a benevolent impression on your hearts, that you may know that infidels are not those monstrous, those absurd and irrational beings which it is convenient in some assemblies, where one side only is heard, to represent them. My objection was this, I regretted that when it served the purpose in hand, you should have set up what I hold to be conflicting testimony to the Scriptures themselves. Now the Scriptures themselves do not speak of the Jews as a nation.

Dr. Bennett.—On this subject there really needs no discussion between two individuals. The Bible is open to every man, let him go home and read it. I appeal to the common sense of every person come to the years of maturity, whether both the Old Testament and the New do not speak of these people as a nation.

Mr. Taylor.—Certainly not.

Dr. Bennett.—And whether I have not given a good reason for the passing away of the name of Israelites, and the adoption of the name of Jews instead. We have a parallel case in this country. If a man were to say we are Englishmen, and therefore we are not inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, we are a mere sect in that island, if we were the pure *bona fide* population we should be called Britons, he would be laughed at.

Mr. Taylor.—An illustration is very dangerous and delusive, when substituted in the place of an argument, for you have evaded the terms. The parallel term to that of Jew on my argument would be such an one as Quaker or Methodist. Now it would not follow that if a man were a Quaker or a Methodist, he was not an Englishman, for every body knows that that is a religious, not a political distinction. That is my argument with respect to the Jews. I read in the fifth chapter of St. John's Gospel, that, "No man spake openly of Him for fear of the Jews," in which it is evident that the multitude of the people—if we take the work as a history—were not Jews, but the Jews were a religious sect existing among them.

Dr. Bennett.—This is a thought that would scarcely have entered into any one's mind. It is quite manifest, that the disciples of Jesus Christ were considered as outcasts from their nation, for believing in the name of Jesus; and that therefore men were afraid, if they were at all timid in their character, to speak openly their sentiments

of Jesus, because the whole nation were up in arms against Jesus, and the leaders of the people were hostile to him. They were in danger of being ill treated by their countrymen the Jews.

Mr. Taylor. — That the term Jew is not a *national* distinction, but a *theological* one, is apparent, in that Paul speaks of himself as a Jew born at Tarsus, a city in Cilicia. Now it is absurd to say, that a man is not of the country he was born in. It is the same as saying that an Irishman was born at Rome.

Dr. Bennett. — Let me entreat you to bring home this argument. Did you never see a Jew? Did you never ask him where he was born? Did he never tell you he was born in England—in Duke's Place? And yet it seems, that a man cannot be a Jew if he were born in England.

Mr. Taylor. — Let me entreat you, Sir, for God's sake—that God whom you profess to fear and serve—that you give no twist to my arguments. You must be well aware that I should be thought an idiot, if I denied the existence of the Jews as a religious sect. I believe that a religious sect called Jews did exist from very early ages; but my argument is a denial of their ever having existed as a political body, as a nation, as a kingdom.

Dr. Bennett. — If that be the case, then we need only turn and ask, whether the Scriptures of the New Testament, read by any impartial mind, do not shew that the Jews was the name for a nation? And likewise, let me ask, whether there is not a plain reason why the questioner has been somewhat bewildered on this subject? The same people were both a nation, and, if you please, a religious sect. They were distinguished from all people upon the earth, as much by their religion as by their nation. They were distinguished for the sake of their religion. It was for its sake that their very nation was formed, that a certain soil was given

to them, that they were preserved there by the special interposition of Heaven. The religious sect and the nation were identical. There were no others of that sect, except a few in later times, who adopted their religion and their rites. Now let me entreat you to remember, that this is really spending a long time upon an affair that every person can satisfy himself about; and if the questioner supposes that the name Jew signifies a pious person, and that it marks out their piety—if I understand it quite right—then I will shew a case in the Acts of the Apostles, in which an impious person was marked out by that name. “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess.” Now this Jewess was a person of no very honourable character. The great people at that time were known to be excessively corrupt, and she was called a Jewess from her nation, with no respect whatever to her being a pious person.

Mr. Taylor.—That argument will fall to the ground, from the remembrance of the fact, that when we speak of pious people and the name of religious sects, we do not speak of those merely who act consistently with their profession. She might profess to be a Jewess, however bad she might be.

Dr. Bennett.—If I understand right, the name that was supposed to mark out a pious person might be applied to an impious person. I do not mean this as a turn, but merely to give a short cut to an argument which cannot last a long time. It appears to me, that if we are to dispute upon a point which every person can satisfy himself upon, we may remain here till midnight. I ask whether this is meeting my argument? The Jews now are known not to be too pious; but they are known to be of a certain stock, and they are known to call themselves of a certain nation. They say, “My nation” did so and so; meaning the Jews scattered

all over the earth among the nations. They take the word as signifying a nation, and who are better authorities among a people, than the people themselves. If a Frenchman should dispute with me, as to the proper application of the word Frenchman—whether it meant a Frank, and applied strictly to men of a certain part of France, I should bow and say, You are a native, and must know the terms of your language better than I. I take them in common parlance, and therefore I speak ignorantly, and I am ignorant with all the world.—Well, then, if the Frenchman should dispute with me respecting the proper application of the name of a Briton, I should expect him to bow to my authority. Respecting the proper application of the word Jew, I take it as the Jews themselves take it: and as I find it employed in all literature and in all countries, so I find it taken in the Scriptures themselves. I have given a sufficient reason why it is applied to one nation. The tribe of Judah attracted particular attention, and they were all called Jews from that time.

Mr. Taylor.—We are at issue there, for I deny most respectfully that the Jews are in the Scriptures spoken of as a particular nation. I find it in every phrase pitted in antithesis with the gentiles, and as the gentiles did not mean a nation, but the general body of the world, not embracing that religious persuasion, it is evident that the name of Jews was the name of a religious sect. But the gentleman is entirely incorrect in his statement about Jerusalem being a fine country. The site of Jerusalem in which these people were assembled, is such as to render it quite impossible that any great nation could ever have assembled there. The whole circumference of the site of Jerusalem is but two miles and a half round, and is a barren country. Chateaubriand, who lately visited it, speaks of it as a barren place, in the midst of a wilderness.

Dr. Bennett.—With regard to the Jews signifying a nation, if I may be allowed to appeal to the New Testament, (this is not pagan authority,) Paul says in the 24th chapter of Acts, and the 17th verse, “Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.”—

Mr. Taylor.—I particularly state—for I aim only at truth—that the word nation admits, like every other word, of a figurative as well as an absolute meaning.

Dr. Bennett.—It will be recollected that if a disturbance arise, we shall dissolve the assembly.

Mr. Taylor.—I am well aware, that disturbances will never arise on the infidel side of the question. The passage to which I refer is in the sacred book itself, where St. Paul speaks of religious people not being national, “A peculiar people. a holy *nation*, a royal priesthood.”

Dr. Bennett.—That does not apply to the Jews.

Mr. Taylor.—Is not the term used there in a figurative sense? and may it not also be so used in the passage you have quoted?

Dr. Bennett.—It really is not worth while for us to dispute about the figurative meaning of the word nation, or about the religious nature of this sect, if you like. In the next chapter you will find Paul says, “I know thee to be expert (speaking to his judge,) in all customs and questions that are among the Jews. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own *nation* at Jerusalem, know all the Jews.” Here again is the nation pointed out as the nation of the Jews.

Mr. Taylor.—I am willing to take a concordance, and to sacrifice my whole argument, if I find not ten theological senses in which the word Jews is used for one national one.

Dr. Bennett.—I have already observed that the nation was itself a church—its government was a

theocracy—its land was a holy land, and its peculiarity was for the sake of religion. They were preserved that men might know the direct line in which the Saviour was to descend ; that his person might be verified. On all these accounts the sanctity of their nation rendered them in the eyes of the rest of the world a sect. They were a sect ; that is, they were selected, or cut off—as the gentleman may know, from the Latin word *seco*, to cut off—they were known to be cut off from the rest of the world, and were thus a sect and a nation too. This is not worth a disputation, and I may now turn to the other question concerning the land and its fertility. Let it be recollected, however, that all this is not touching my argument, it is all wide enough from the Jews being living witnesses of the truth of divine revelation ; but I will not pass by any thing to which I can give time in this discussion, that may, by any possibility, be supposed to have a bearing upon the subject. I will then turn to the fertility of the land, as an additional proof of the truth of this divine book. For this very book mentions a prediction concerning it, uttered four thousand years ago. Moses tells the people who were just then going over Jordan to possess it, If you cast off your God and neglect his law, I call heaven and earth to witness that the land which you are going in to possess shall spue you out, as it has cast out its idolatrous inhabitants before you. You shall be cast out under the whole heaven, and your land shall be given up, and the very dust of it shall be as pitch and brimstone. The heavens shall be brass over your heads, and the land shall be a hissing and a curse, and all nations shall say, Why hath the Lord done this ? And they shall say, Because they forsook the God of their fathers.”

Mr. Taylor.—Reverend Sir, I shall succumb to the argument, if you will acknowledge that it is ne-



cessary to this to believe that a miracle has taken place, and barren rocks and promontories have grown up upon the spot which was once fertile.

Dr. Bennett.—It is well known that the physical condition of a country depends in a vast degree upon its moral state. Had any man, when Julius Cæsar landed in this country, looked round on Britain and said, In about 1800 years there shall be 20 millions of inhabitants covering this island, and these people shall live in cities, so vast that you might travel for days round them, and almost wear out a pair of shoes before you have encompassed their capital—these people shall have roads, bridges, and have such abundance that their very poor shall be clothed better than Cæsar in all the pride of empire—their people shall ride in coaches, (though Augustus rode in a cart)—they shall enjoy such advantages as Romans in the pride of their dominion would have thought impossible, it would have been replied, What! this country maintain such a population and enjoy such physical advantages—no, it cannot be, unless heaven worked a miracle for them.

Mr. Taylor.—Could a country have supported several millions of inhabitants if it consisted of nothing but mere schistus, flints, and broken rocks? Can corn grow upon slates? If so, my argument fails.

Dr. Bennett.—When the reformation in Switzerland took place, Zuingle, the first reformer, argued with his countrymen against quitting their land to become mercenary soldiers to the neighbouring powers. He says, “The Pope, priests, and surrounding princes, tell you that the country cannot support you; it is a barren wilderness, mere rocks and rugged flints; you cannot live there. You had better therefore go and fight as brave soldiers, and bring home the spoils of your enemies, than remain here and starve upon the rocks.” But what

said Zuingle? "Your country is not a barren waste, she is not ungrateful to repay the toils of those that labour on her bosom. She produces every thing that is necessary for food or for clothing, or for the real comforts of man. There is nothing but unnecessary luxuries wanting. Your country can support you, stay at home, increase and multiply, and under the blessing of heaven you shall abound in all things,"—just as the Creator said to his people the Israelites. The very rocks of Judea made way for the vines to grow up. The roots of the vines split the rocks. The force of vegetation drove asunder the very power that seemed to bid defiance to it, and the rocks gave abundant support to the vines to flourish in all their luxuriousness. The inhabitants terraced the hills and made walls of stone, to preserve the soil from washing down, they cultivated the summits of mountains, they abounded in all that was necessary for the good of man; the land was cultivated as by horticultural skill, not by the great labours of the plough: it was divided by the law of God into small districts almost *ad infinitum*, till nearly every man had an acre, and every one was a cultivator. When the earth has the most made of it, scarcely any bounds can be set to its capability of supporting man.

Mr. Taylor.—To that miraculous argument I can bring no objection. Where miracles are required, nothing is impossible to God. The only thing which enlightened reason can urge against it is, that it is monstrously absurd.

Dr. Bennett.—I beg to say, that I appealed to no miracle in my last answer.

Mr. Taylor.—You spoke of vines splitting rocks to make roots for them.

Dr. Bennett.—I have seen it myself, but I never saw a miracle. Every man who goes to a country where stone quarries abound, may see the trees exerting the force of vegetation. Scarcely

anything can resist it; and the powers of nature shew the force which God has given them. That apparently feeble thing, vegetation, is almost like gunpowder, having an expansive power, that defies resistance.

Mr. Taylor.—Can you prove, Sir, the Jews were ever heard of as a nation until the time of Alexander, 330 years before Christ?

Dr. Bennett.—This is really recurring to another question, which does not, after all, apply to my subject. I appeal to the Jews as living witnesses of the truth of the Scriptures. Here they are: account for them, and shew that that account is true, and that it proves the falsehood of divine revelation, and then I am answered; but by no other process. With regard, however, to the question of the Jews, whether they were ever heard of as a nation before the time of Alexander, I say, most certainly, their own records are much older than the times of Alexander.

Mr. Taylor.—I respectfully receive the answer, and commit it to my mind's contemplation; but, Sir, have you any proof that any Jewish document, in writing, existed before the time of the Alexandrian library?

Dr. Bennett.—It is admitted on all hands; every man of sense must admit, that the original must have always existed before the translation. The document that has been supposed to refer to the Alexandrian library was a translation. Every man may see that the Septuagint is a translation.

Mr. Taylor.—Was there ever such a thing as a false religion upon earth?

The Chairman.—I appeal to the audience whether this has any reference to the question.

Mr. Taylor.—I will point out its relation to the question with which I will conclude this discussion. If there have been a false religion on earth, the Almighty cannot have given to man any security

against imposture, but the exercise of his reason—the free and uncontrouled exercise of his reason; and if the exercise of his reason lead him into error, as fallible reason must lead fallible men sometimes, and that error will entail punishment, where are we? who can be safe?

Dr. Bennett.—I am happy to hear that this is the last question, but not because I would not willingly protract the meeting and expend my powers upon this discussion. I shall feel exceedingly happy to be still more exhausted in it than I now am, after having been kept speaking, more or less, for three hours. But I beg to reply, that it is not merely necessary that we should employ our reason, but our reason should be employed under the influence of a right temper of mind. We all know perfectly well that, when we see a child conceited, asking questions of its parents, talking in a flip-pant air, telling its father and its mother that it knows better than they—that such a child, whatever be its investigations, or the acuteness of its intellectual powers, is not likely to come to sound knowledge; for it must have deference to the instruction of a parent, as well as curiosity to put questions. I would then recommend the questioner—it is a serious question for us all, and I would address each one as a friend; I would recommend you, if you believe there is a God that made you and that made this universe, and will judge you at last—it is a point of reason, as well as of modesty—to bow at the throne of that Being, and say, “Father of lights, shed thy light upon my benighted mind, and lead me into all truth.” If, instead of this, we set up our judgment, and ask no counsel from on high; never retire to the privacy of the closet, never in deep prostration of soul seek to be guided into all truth; is it wondrous, if a justly offended Being leave us to wander in our own delusions? and shall we at the last day have a right to

accuse him, when he says, if you missed the truth  
“Did you ever ask me to teach you?”

Mr. Taylor.—May I return my thanks, for the instruction you have given, and in sympathy for the fatigue you have undergone, to request that you will spare yourself? I am very much obliged and honoured, and I return you my heartfelt and respectful thanks.

Dr. Bennett.—I feel indebted to you, Sir, for the manner in which you have received what I have attempted to say. I return to you my acknowledgements for the way in which you have uttered your questions; and I most earnestly pray that you may be led to the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, in which consists eternal life.

## RELIGION NO PRIESTCRAFT.

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2 CORINTH. iv. 2.

*“ We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.*

“ RELIGION is nothing but priestcraft,” say the infidels. “ It is a cunning scheme to work upon men’s credulity and fears, in order to enslave the human mind, and get the command of the purse.” This bare assertion is supposed to be a triumphant argument, a death blow to religion, and a sufficient reason why a rational being should pay no attention to convincing evidence, and venture into eternity reckless of the consequence.

But is this bold speech to settle the question, without farther inquiry ? Are we not to look into the Bible, to examine it for ourselves ? Then we shall make the infidel our priest. If his assertion is to go for proof, and his opinion is to be taken as infallible, then he will be our pope, and we have only changed one priestcraft for another, the Christian for the infidel. And who can give us security that the new pope will not, one day, use fire and faggot as freely as the old one ?

Let us, then, look the charge fairly in the face. Happily for us, we can in this country say, we will read the Bible for ourselves, and see whether the charge of priestcraft, so confidently flung out against it, can be proved. We will then, not merely look

into it as some do, who wish to discover there something to find fault with; but we will study it, for this express purpose, to ascertain whether it is a mere invention of the priests, or such a book as they might fairly be supposed to have made for themselves, in order to bind the yoke of their authority upon the necks of men, and be enabled to live in ease and splendour at the expense of others.

But what strange surprise seizes us, on opening the book! We find no mention at all of priests. We travel through page after page, crying, where are the priests? but we cannot find them. We advance through almost two thousand years of the history of the Bible, before we meet with the word or the thing, and then catch a mere momentary glance at Melchisedec, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God; but as he was not of the order of priests of which the Scripture principally speaks, he vanishes again, and we read no more of priests, for hundreds of years.

If we believe the Bible then, we must conclude that the world was able to do without priests, for nearly twenty centuries. Does this look like priestcraft? Would priests have written such a book, to serve their own purposes? Would they have sunken themselves so low in the scale of dignity and importance? Would they have told the world, that it existed almost two thousand years, without them?

No; if priests had manufactured the book, to serve the craft, they would have told us that we could not live without them, that, from the beginning, they were our teachers and guides, our spiritual rulers, and intercessors with heaven; and that nature could more easily spare the sun, than society and religion could flourish without priests. Ah! the opening of the inquiry is any thing but favourable to the outcry of priestcraft raised against the Bible.

But now we come to the commencement of the third thousand years, and we find an order of priests



instituted, at the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Here the infidel thinks it is his time to triumph. Yet many shout victory before the battle is fought, and afterwards find they have to sing their song backwards. It would, however, be wise to hearken, for once, to the voice of the Bible.

By whom was the new order of priests appointed? Moses said he received this institution from God. "From God!" exclaims the infidel contemptuously; "that is easily said. It was all a mere pretence to gull the people into submission." But men had common sense then, as well as infidels have now; and there are many things in the history of Israel to prove that there were others among them who aspired to the priesthood, and who were not too easily satisfied that this institution came from God.

Yet you affirm that Moses was a crafty priest, who took good care of his own interest! Not so hasty. Moses was not a priest at all; nor did he make his own family priests. "Will you assert that?" the infidel asks. I will: deny it who can. The whole nation of the Jews was divided into twelve tribes, or as we should say, counties, each descended from one of the twelve sons of Jacob. One of these, that which descended from Levi, was chosen, not to be priests strictly so called, but literati, mathematicians, school-masters, and lawyers. One family, that of Aaron; observe, not that of Moses; was selected for the priesthood, and an elder branch for the high priesthood.

Aaron himself was the first high priest. Moses never was a priest even of the inferior order, and his sons were left to sink into the common class of mere Levites. Is this a sign of priestcraft in Moses? Would any of the great ones of the earth, if placed at the head of the nation, as Moses was, leave their family to sink into an inferior grade, and exalt others to the first rank in the state? Let any candid impartial man say whether there is not here some sign

of sincerity in Moses. Would he have done this, if he had not been under superior orders? Had he been a cunning impostor, cajoling the people, in order to serve his own interests, would he not have made himself high priest, and secured the succession to his sons? Where is the impostor that would degrade himself and his family, to exalt others above them?

But we will travel another stage in the inquiry. The tribe of Levi, from which the priests were taken, being one of the twelve that composed the nation, had a fair claim to divide the land of Canaan along with the rest of their countrymen. But this one tribe was omitted, in the division of the land, which was shared among the others. Surely, this does not look like priestcraft. Mere priests, if they had managed this affair, would have taken better care of the landed estates, and would have been sure to secure a rich tract of church lands. This second stage of the inquiry turns out no better for infidels than the former.

“But how were these priests to live?” it is asked. “If they divided out the lands among their brethren, they surely did not leave themselves to starve, or depend upon alms.” No: they had, instead of their share of the whole soil, a tenth part of the other estates; that is to say, they had the tithes. Now, exclaims the infidel, the cloven foot peeps out. Here are the priests taking care of the tithes. Well now, if you think this establishes your charge, place yourselves in the same situation with the tribe of Levi. Suppose yourself one of the twelve sons of a country gentleman, of twelve hundred a year from landed property. Your father is about to make his will. He says, “I will either divide my estate equally among my sons, or I will leave you out, and divide the estate among the other eleven, and charge their shares with the payment of a tenth of the produce to you.” Would you like it? Would you exult and ex-

claim, " what a happy arrangement for me ! What a preference has my father shewn to me above all my brothers !" Should we not hear you say, " No, thank you, Sir. I would rather have an estate of my own and make the best I can of it, than have to collect a little from one, and a little from another, and be liable to be flung out of my share, by the petty arts that may frequently leave me to a miserable substitute for my portion. Besides, suppose my brothers should, in course of time, forget my father's will, choose not to reflect how they came by their estates, and say, I shall not give a tenth of my produce to you, you must get your living as you can : how should I help myself ? They are in possession, and that is nine points of the law ; and they are eleven to one against me, so that I cannot enforce my claims. I shall find myself very hardly dealt with." You would refuse your assent to such a will. Then where is the evidence of priestcraft, even in the tithe system, as it is found in the Bible ? What proof is there that it is a cunning contrivance of the ministers of religion, to enrich themselves, at the expense of others ? This is a different affair from the present tithe law, which gives a tenth of the produce to those who are not a thousandth part of the population.

But it will not do to leave the question yet ; for we have not seen through the whole case. This business, which is so soon settled by some, is rather more complicated than they suspect, and requires more ample consideration. The whole tribe of Levi, which was a twelfth part of the Jewish nation, had a tenth of the produce of the soil ; but the priests, strictly so called, were the descendants of one family, and had only a tithe of the Levites' tithe, that is to say, they had a hundredth part of the produce of the country. This at least was their portion, while they were officiating in the temple at Jerusalem.

But while the other tribes lived on their own estates, where were the descendants of Levi to reside? They were scattered over the estates of the other tribes, who were commanded to resign to them certain cities; there the Levites had not only the houses, but the adjoining commons to turn their cattle out upon. Now, the infidel exclaims, we see these Levites come in for more than their share. They have not only the tithes of the other estates, but estates of their own besides.

Well, let us try again how you would like this for yourselves. Suppose the inhabitants of one county in England, those of Hampshire for example, were compelled to resign all their estates, to be shared among the people of the other counties. Suppose the Hampshire men were now obliged to live upon tithes. Would they not say, we gave up something more than mere naked fields; we quitted our towns with well-built houses, that cost large sums, and do not require to be rebuilt every year, as the land requires to be cultivated. Are we now, not merely to live upon tithes, but must we live like gypsies too, under the hedges? We ought at least to have some towns made over to us in each of the other counties; such as Poole in Dorset, and Lewes in Sussex, and Maidstone in Kent; and so on through the other counties, till we have received an equivalent for the towns, as well as the lands of Hampshire. Come then, you see the priests have not received so much more than their share, as at first sight you imagined.

No—nor, after all, would the Hampshire men like the arrangement. They would say, “we lived, before, as a united people, attached to each other, and now we are to be scattered over the kingdom, some living in Cornwall and others in Cumberland, where we can hold no intercourse, and form no combination, as the people of other counties can. Pray, why are we to be scattered, as if the riot act had been read

to us? What have we done, that we are not to be seen together? Let us go back and retake our county, and live together among people of our own habits, and stand by each other, and not be spread like manure over the land.

But the tribe of Levi, which contained all the priests, submitted to this dispersion. Verily, it does not look like the craft of the priests. It has more of the air of a judgment of heaven, a punishment for some crime. And so Moses represents it, telling us that the dying patriarch, Jacob, denounced this as an expression of the displeasure of God, for the cruelty of Levi toward the Shechemites.

The singular arrangement was, however, for the national benefit; for the literary tribe was, by this means, diffused over the whole country. Not merely priests, but writers, schoolmasters, mathematicians, and judges, were equally dispersed among the whole population, for their instruction. But it was at the expense, rather than for the benefit, of the scattered tribe. So you find the priestcraft of the Bible a very slippery thing. Sometimes you think you have seized it, but when you look, you find you have nothing in your hands.

Were we to go into minute particulars, this would be still more manifest. The priests and Levites had to travel, in their turns, from all parts of the country where they lived, to Jerusalem, the capital, where stood the temple in which they were to officiate. Should *we* like this? Some ignorantly suppose, that the priests had nothing to do but to pray and preach; but there was then no preaching in public worship. The priests had services to perform which required much bodily labour. The Levites were obliged to mount guard, and keep watch all night in the temple, which was a kind of fortress. But we will pass over the minutiae, and keep to great capital points.

Here, then, is an important question to be consi-

dered, in trying the Bible on a charge of priestcraft. The tithes, which were the support of the sacred tribe, were given for the maintenance of the true religion. Suppose now the people should become indifferent to their religion, or should choose to change it for the idolatries of the surrounding nations, then where would the priests and Levites be? The other tribes had got hold of all the landed estates; and when they cast off the religion which deprived the tribe of Levi of its share, would they not fling that tribe out of its tithes too? Would they not say, "What do we care for the priests of Jehovah? We shall not give them our corn: we want our property to support our new religion, and to offer sacrifices to Baal." Now this actually happened. The people became so indifferent to the law of Jehovah, that his ministers were left to want, and must often have been disposed to say, "O, that we had taken our share of the landed estates!—then we should have been independent gentlemen, instead of poor begging Levites." The whole nation, with its king, frequently became deadly enemies to the worship of God, and to his temple at Jerusalem. Levites were then seen wandering about and begging their bread. The reproaches which the prophets poured upon the idolatrous kings and people, implied also accusations of cruelty and injustice towards their brethren the Levites, who had as good a right to be supported by the soil as those who held the estates. But what availed the sermons of the prophets, with a people who had learned to despise the God who sent them? How feeble were appeals to justice and humanity, with those who took delight in making their children pass through the fire to Moloch!

And yet infidels say, priests are cunning enough to take care of their own interests. They have plenty of sagacity in looking well after the loaves and fishes. Well then, would not the keen eye of selfishness see from afar the events we have men-

tioned, as likely to happen? Let us at least be consistent, for consistency is essential to any tolerable combination of sense and honesty. No fair reasoner would say, that the priests were at once cunning knaves and arrant fools. If they did not foresee the events that occurred, they were not the artful impostors that you would make them out: and if they did, and yet submitted to the tithe system, it is a proof that they bowed to a divine law, which they could not resist.

Come on, then—this inquiry turns out so well for my cause, that you must not wonder that I am disposed to go forward in sprightly mood. What security had the priestly tribe against this event, which they might easily have foreseen as likely to happen? Nothing but religion. The continuance of the fear and worship of the true God could alone assure them of the payment of their tithes. If they neglected to do their own duty, and left the people ignorant of the claims of Jehovah and his law, farewell tithes. If the nation were suffered to fall into idolatry or infidelity, the Levites would be left to live upon the air, if they could. Now this, of itself, is a mark of sincerity. Whenever men submit to these terms, “as long as we do the work, we will receive the wages; but if we do nothing, we will have nothing;” you may give them credit for honest intentions.

Again, then I ask, does this look like priestcraft? Would not mere cunning impostors have said, “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush? Let us take care to have our share of the land, along with the other tribes, and then come what may, we are safe. As to trusting to the influence of religion, that may do very well for enthusiasts, but we should like something more tangible and durable. People may change their minds about religion, as we see they often do, but a good solid estate cannot run away. To get what we can out of the people while



they are religious may be a very good thing by the way, a pretty sort of pin money for our wives and daughters, but after all, there is nothing like good meadows and arable land."

Now this uncertain provision for the priests lasted for nearly two thousand years, and, during all this time, they were frequently in the most distressed and humiliating state. It was, indeed, their own fault. The prophets who were raised up by extraordinary inspiration, from time to time, reproached the priests most severely for the general corruption of manners, which, by the way, is a plain proof that the Bible, which records these cutting reproaches, is any thing but a book of priestcraft.

If the Bible had contained a plan that furnished the priests with a security against the consequences of their own guilty negligence, what would infidels have said? Merely to prosper when we do our duty, is a condition which none but honest men approve. Knaves like something else. We have found in the Bible, then, nothing but a provision for the rewards due to honest labour, and for the just, but severe punishment of guilty negligence. The outcry which, in our times, has been raised against tithes, has arisen from their being found to be a provision for idleness and luxury. There are, indeed, many who have long condemned tithes under the Gospel dispensation, as an incongruous graft of a Jewish slip upon a Christian stock. But the majority of the country never entered into this theological question. The present current that is setting in so strongly against tithes, flows from the evil working of the system. Had those who hold the tithes been living among their parishioners, faithfully labouring to do them good, we should not have heard, "down with the tithes," from north to south, and from east to west. But the tithes, as God gave them, were a provision for the reward of honest labour and faithful service.

“Alas ! alas !” the infidel must cry, “we have lost our hold again. Which way shall we turn now ?” This Lecture shall help you to another chance. For I suspect we know more about the Jews and the Bible than the infidels do, and we are so sure of the goodness of our cause that we can afford to be liberal. We will do for you what you could not do for yourselves. For all that the Bible wants is fair play. Say all that you please, so long as you do but prove what you say. Act like the ancient Greeks, who engaged to suffer what they attempted to bring upon another, by the sentence of the law, if they did not substantiate their charge. Pledge yourselves to bear the blame, if you cannot prove the Bible guilty of abetting priestcraft.

We will tell you, then, what many of you may not know, that though the Bible did not make the priests rulers of Judea, but appointed the tribe of Judah to hold the throne, there was a time when the high priests were virtually kings also. Now make the most of this information. Say, then the priests took care to seat themselves on the throne at last ! True, but what has the Bible to do with that ? The Bible did not enjoin it ; if the Bible had been obeyed, it never could have occurred, and the Bible does not even mention it ; so that we should not have known it, if other histories had not recorded it ; for the history of the world ceases to be recorded in the Scriptures, just where profane history supersedes the necessity. When the neighbouring kings of Syria oppressed the Jews, and compelled them to offer sacrifices to blocks of wood and stone, such as all other nations, even the most cultivated, worshipped, except the Jews, a priest nobly resisted the tyrant, and roused the country to arms. The family of this priest, called Maccabees, after performing prodigies of valour, and rescuing their country from foreign tyranny and idolatry, were

raised to the throne, and the same person was both priest and king.

If this be thought a certain proof of the ambition of priests, that they seated themselves in the throne, as soon as they could ; it might, at least, be admitted to be a proof of their valour and patriotism. But the Bible, the Bible ! Did the Bible make the priests kings also ? No ; then the Bible must be acquitted again.

This unscriptural arrangement was altered by the Romans, who, under Pompey, made themselves masters of the country, and seated Herod, an Edomite, on the throne of Judea, before the coming of Christ. “ What ! have we again lost our hold of our enemy ? ” the infidel may exclaim. “ Then we must give up the Old Testament, in despair of substantiating our charge against it. But we will turn and try what we can do with the New.” You shall, for we are ready to meet you there.

Open the book. What do you discover there about priests. Through all the four Gospels you find no collusion between Christ and the Jewish priests, but a continual conflict, an embittered opposition on their parts, and a firm meek endurance on his. While he charged them with guilt, they plotted against his life. Had priestcraft been the origin and design of Christianity, it would have exhibited Jesus applauding the priests, playing into their hands, and assisting them to rivet upon the necks of the people the chain of ecclesiastical power. This would have been proclaimed as proof positive of the charge which I am now labouring to refute. Then, is not the absence of all this, and the presence of every thing that is directly opposite, a positive proof that the charge of priestcraft is false ? Opposite premises must lead to opposite conclusions, and Christianity is opposite to priestcraft.

This concerns the Jewish priesthood. How did

Christianity treat the heathen priests? It took little or no notice of them, but conducted itself as if there were no such beings in existence. This was certainly not courting them, nor playing into their hands. A man would hardly know from the New Testament that there had been any heathen priests; though they were so important in their own eyes and in the eyes of their adherents, that sovereign princes assumed the office of priests, and the Roman Emperor, in all the pride of universal dominion, piqued himself on the title of *Pontifex Maximus*.

The only instance in which heathen priests stand out prominently to notice in the New Testament, is in the Acts of the Apostles, where Paul and Barnabas are said to have cured the cripple at Lystra. Acts xiv. 8—18. “And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us, in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye do these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not him-

self without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them."

Here was no priestcraft ; no honours are paid to the priests of the idol ; but contempt is poured upon the block as a lying vanity, and by consequence upon its ministers. The Apostles, far from seizing this fine opportunity to set up for deities, rent their clothes, indignant at the insult offered to the true God. What a contrast between their conduct and that of Captain Cook, who suffered himself to be worshipped, in Owhyhee, as Oro, their god of war !

Let us now advance to the history of the Christian church. By whom was it founded ? By the twelve Apostles. And who were they ? Jewish priests ? No, they were what would be called laymen, fishermen. Hitherto, then, we have no symptoms of priestcraft. But you will say, these Apostles made themselves the priests of the new religion. How does this appear ? Did they assume the name of priests ? Never. Did they claim the tithes ? No. They declared that the old law, with its priesthood, was abolished. One of them, Paul, wrote a letter to the Hebrew Christians, to shew that the former dispensation being merely introductory to the Messiah, was superseded by his religion, and that the design of the ancient temple, priests tithes, and sacrifices, was now to be found in Christ.

What then, the infidel exclaims, do you mean to assert that the Christian religion has no order of priesthood ? I do. Who can deny it ? But if you find it hard to digest, read the book for yourselves. There you will find that Christians are, in a figurative sense, called priests, who offer unto God spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to him through Jesus Christ. But this applies equally to *all* ; as much to those who are called the laity as to the clergy ; to

merchants, tradesmen, physicians and farmers ; as well as to “ministers of the word.” These ministers are called elders, pastors, bishops, but never priests.

You exclaim, but are not Christian ministers commonly called priests, among the Roman Catholics ? And do we not read in the Common Prayer book, “ then shall the priest say ? ” All this is true ; but it is not at all to the purpose. For we are now inquiring, not what others say, or do ; but what saith the Scripture ? If people will speak without book, we cannot help that. Our business is to bring them to book.

As to what Christian ministers are called, in Catholic countries ; you must be aware that there the Bible is locked up as a prohibited book. In Spain, Portugal, or Italy, if a man be found with the Bible in his hands, not only will it be snatched away, and thrown into the flames, but he may think himself happy if he be not thrown there too. Now, look this fact steadily in the face. Nay, do not wink ; for though it is a bright evidence in my favour, you ought to be able to bear its light. Where priests reign, the Bible burns. Where the Bible reigns, priests must bow. In this country, where the Bible is, or may be, in every one’s hands, every one examines the claims of ministers, and gives them as much as he thinks they deserve. When priests prohibit the Bible, they shew themselves like “ the children of this world, wise in their generation.” If I wished to destroy the reign of the priesthood in any country, I would send the Bible among them ; just as I would put gunpowder into a rock, if I wished to blow it up. Does the Bible, then, look like a patent for priestcraft ? Just as much as the sun looks like a funeral pall, or Paine resembles an apostle of Jesus Christ.

If the priests, who are thought to know their own interest pretty well, believed that the Bible was their

charter, they would, wherever they rule the world, take care to makethis the horn book of each village school, and its texts the A B C of elementary instruction, that children might suck in reverence for a priest, almost with their mother's milk. You reply, well, the ministers of religion are doing so here. Are they not moving heaven and earth to put the Bible into every man's hands? Ah! true, but the argument makes against you; it would have been better for you not to have touched it; for where the Bible rules the priests do not, their reign ends where that of the Scripture begins. In this country, where the Scriptures are open to every man, people think as they please about the ministers of religion, and take the liberty to say what they think, and believe that they have a right to do as they say.

"Alas! alas! the priestcraft of the Bible is gone again," you exclaim. "There is a sort of witchery about this thing; we are under some strange mysterious spell; for we are, ever and anon, mocked with the hopes of victory, only to make our defeat the more mortifying and ridiculous. What shall we do?" Indeed, I can scarcely tell you now; for I have gone on with my liberality, till it is almost all spent; I am at the end of my tether, and can afford you no more help.

This, however, I must tell you; that the tithes, which we have shown to be no great masterpiece of priestcraft in the Jew's religion, are no part and parcel of Christianity. Read the New Testament, and you will find neither Christ, nor his apostles, commanding Christians to give a tithe of their property to the support of his church.

You ask then, how are the ministers of religion to be supported? Are they to live upon the air? Are they to be fed by miracle? Or are they to work for their living, and are we to have none but preaching farmers and tradesmen? Would not this spoil both the farmer and the minister? Do not the



Scriptures themselves charge ministers to give themselves wholly to their office? And say that "no man who thus warreth should entangle himself with the affairs of this life?" I answer that the Scriptures nowhere forbid any man, who knows the way of salvation, from teaching it to others; but they command those who take the charge of a Christian church to devote themselves wholly to its interest; for they will find here enough to employ all their powers.

- How then, you ask again, are they to be supported? Must they be all men of fortune, to maintain themselves and their families by private property? Had this been the case, you had probably accused the New Testament of setting up none but rich men for instructors, as if riches gave brains. But it is notorious that Christ chose poor, rather than rich men, for the first pastors of his flock. He, therefore, charged those who had the benefit of their instructions, to share with their ministers the profits of earthly labours.

Now you say, "we have come to the same thing at last, though by a circuitous route." You are again too hasty with your song of triumph. For who is to judge what proportion of your property you are to give to your ministers? There is no tax prescribed in the New Testament. The people are left to decide for themselves, and to give according to the promptings of their own heart. They are laid under no other injunction, than that of considering how reasonable and just it is, that, if some men live to administer to other men's spiritual wants, the benefited party should, in their turn, administer to the temporal wants of their benefactors. Where is the priestcraft of this? You might as well charge the physician with medical craft, for taking fees from the patient whom he has cured.

But we have not yet finished our defence. The apostles were, at first, the only officers of the Chris-

tian church. These taught the sacred duty of liberality to the poor with such success, that the Christians not merely gave their money, but sold their houses and lands, and bringing the price, laid it at the apostles' feet. "A fine golden harvest!" you exclaim. "These ministers of religion, whether priests or not, (a name signifies nothing) contrive, somehow or other, to get the purse into their own hands."

What! will you never have done singing the song of victory before the battle is fought? Patience! You will be put down quite soon enough. The apostles did not take the purse into their own hands, they put it into the people's hands. Read the history for yourselves. Acts vi. 1—4. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

After you have read this, however cruel your disappointment and mortification may be, do not charge us with insulting over you, for we are but defending ourselves from your attacks. You began by charging the Bible with being a book of mere priestcraft, and we brought forward the Bible to defend itself, which, I assure you, it is very well able to do, against all the world. Will you now abandon this charge for ever and for ever?

But I see you hesitate. Then I will compel you. I will give you, however, another such chance as the lion gives his prey. The officers who were instituted to take charge of the Christian church, were what are called deacons. "Oh! Deacons!" you exclaim. "This is

again what we just now detected, the same thing under another name ! For deacons are only priests in their novitiate. A man is first made a deacon, for a year or two, and then he is made a priest. But he is as much a priest, to all practical and important purposes, at first, as at last, and the world knows no difference between the one and the other. The purse, then, is, after all, kept in the hands of the priests."

Still shouting before the battle ! But the book ! the book ! Go, read again the story of the institution of deacons, for you have not learned it yet. Were they not intended to be different persons from the preachers of the Gospel ? Was not this the very reason why the deacons were appointed—"because it was not proper for ministers to leave the Word of God to serve tables," where money was counted out and distributed ? And did not the apostles say to the whole multitude, "Choose you out men; whom we may set over this business, but we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word ?" It signifies not what sort of persons are *now* called by the name of deacons. Our business is with the Bible. It is that which I have undertaken to defend. Let those that can, defend the modern application of the word deacon. That is their concern, not mine.

Now let us review the whole Christian polity, and see how well it can defend itself against the charge of priestcraft.

In the first place, Jesus Christ was not one of the Jewish priests. He was of another tribe. Born in humble circumstances, he was thought to have worked at the trade of his supposed father, a carpenter. He lived familiarly among the people, teaching them with frankness and simplicity, and admitting any one to put questions, which he answered with the meekness of wisdom. He was hated, persecuted and condemned to death by priests.

Having promised, before his death, to set up a spiritual kingdom, which should spread over the

world ; he gave a general law for its regulation. This is it, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. “ Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”

Here is the spirit of philanthropy and equity. All Christians are considered as brothers. If we offend one another, the offended party is not to appeal to law, or to arms ; but to go and tell the offender coolly of his faults, not to reproach or exasperate, but to gain him over. It is supposed that this will succeed. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. A great gain ! a valuable acquisition of a new brother, or, a lost one restored !

But, if he will not hear thee, what then ? Thou shalt take him by the throat, or take the law of him, or put him into a spiritual court ? No : Then take with thee one or two more, that is to say, of the brethren. No fellowship club could have more of the fraternal spirit than is here exhibited. These additional witnesses are to verify the charge and defence, and prepare for another tribunal. “ If the offender neglects to hear them,” it is said, as if, when the two original parties could not settle their difference, there was reason to fear that others would not succeed. What shall be done then ?

“ Then tell it to the church.” But what is the church ? The priesthood, say some ; and infidels, taking the word of priests, for once, come to the same conclusion. But how often must we tell you, that there is no order of priests in the Christian religion ? The word employed by the Evangelist means nothing more than company, congregation, or assembly. It

signifies a mob in Acts xix. 32. It might be so translated here, "tell it to the whole mob." But this English word would be improper, not because it is radically wrong; but because it conveys such a disrespectful idea of the company as was not intended by the Saviour. "Tell it to the company, or community," *i. e.* of the brethren. Here, then, brothers are to be judged by a jury of their peers, or a court of brothers

What follows next? 'If the offender neglect to hear the church," which is supposed to speak, or give its vote, what shall be done to him? Put him into the spiritual court, throw him into the dungeons of the Inquisition, and, at last, commit him to the flames by an *auta da fe*? No: "let him be to thee as a heathen man, or a publican." Well, what does this amount to? How were they to treat the heathen? They were to go and "preach to them repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And was this what was to be done to one that would not hear the church? Yes; so Jesus Christ commands. Well, you say, that would not break his bones nor burn his flesh.

But he was to be treated as a publican too. How was that? Publicans were not what we mean by that name, but tax gatherers of the Roman Empire, who were considered by the Jews as vile persons. They were classed with harlots. How then did Jesus Christ treat these notorious sinners? He was accused of being too favourable to them. His enemies said of him, "Behold a friend of publicans and sinners!" In fact, he did say to the proud pretenders to piety, "publicans and harlots shall enter the kingdom before you." He chose Matthew, the publican, to be one of the twelve apostles. They who will not hear the church, then, are to be considered as great sinners, for whom we are to feel great compassion, and to employ our utmost efforts, that they may not perish in their sins. Here is no more evi-

dence of a persecuting priesthood than you will find in the rules of a common reading society.

Now, for the next step. The whole Christian people were made spiritual priests; and if our whole nation were made literal priests, would not this be equivalent to having no priests at all? If every man were a member of parliament, none would be representatives of others.

To advance farther. The apostles advised the Christian community to choose deacons from among themselves, to manage money matters. Could they have given a greater proof of honesty? Would impostors have parted with the purse? Would they not have said, we must not let that go out of our hands; for he that rules the purse rules the roast. Then, is not opposite conduct a proof of an opposite character? When the purse was given up to what is called the laity, was not the grand means of influence, that is to say of corrupt influence, abandoned? Did not the Christian church then receive its Magna Charta, a charter of liberty? Is it not this which constitutes the vital principle of freedom in our constitution? The Commons hold the purse, and as long as all money bills originate with them, we must be free; for a standing army cannot exist without being paid.

How were these lay deacons, the receivers and distributors of church property, to be chosen? The apostles said to the whole community, "choose them yourselves." No wonder "the saying pleased the whole multitude." Had the apostles been impostors, they would have taken care to choose the deacons themselves.

But whence, you ask, was the money to come, of which the deacons were to take care? Every man was to give—would you believe it?—as he pleased. But, I see you think this too good to be true. Then let me tell you, by the way, that nothing is too good to be true of our religion. Search the New Testa-

ment through, and see if you can find any other than voluntary contributions sanctioned there.

But another question may be asked. How were the Christian ministers appointed? Who chose them? Or did they choose one another? Or had the people the right of free election? Look, read, and learn for yourselves. You have as good a right to study the statute book of Christianity as I have. Why do you ask me? If I tell you, perhaps you will suspect my testimony, and say I am one of the priests, though I have denied the charge, and declared that I am no more a priest than any other Christian. Perhaps you say, I have read (I wish you may be able) and can find no other than popular elections to office in the Christian church. No more can I. I find a description given of the kind of persons that should be chosen, and churches censured for having teachers whom Christ disapproved. This proves that the church, or community, had power to choose and to remove ministers. For, suppose a person to be blamed for having a bad parson. If this reply could be made, "I did not choose him. I cannot remove him: why then should I be blamed?" Would not this throw back the censure on him that first threw it out? Your charge of priestcraft is lost again.

Out of this, arises another question. If the people chose the ministers, who chose the people? Who received them into the society, and admitted them to a share of all its rights? They received one another. When Paul himself, after his conversion, came to Jerusalem, from which he had gone forth to persecute the Christians, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus: and he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."



The church which had the key to let members in, had also that by which it let them out. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, blamed them for suffering a man who had fallen into sin, to remain in their communion. This proves that the whole church had this affair in their own hands. The same truth is further confirmed by the sequel of the narrative. For when this fallen Christian had repented, and was deeply afflicted for his sin, Paul wrote to the church to restore him, and confirm their love to him.

But here some will perhaps exclaim, "Is not this mob government? The people received and excluded each other; and then the whole body chose its ministers, pastors or bishops, and its deacons; is not this the wildest democracy? Can it be good government, worthy of God to give? Can a gentleman submit to such a system?" This objection being the very opposite of the charge of priestcraft and ecclesiastical domination, is not what I am bound to answer. If the same person makes both objections, he contradicts himself, and so may be left to answer himself. But, as whatever seems to impeach the wisdom of the Scriptures, may be taken for an argument against their divinity, I will answer.

Those who compose a Christian church must be Christians. Read the commencement of the epistles, and you will find to what kind of persons they are addressed. The christian character includes piety, wisdom, meekness, benevolence, and faithful obedience to Christ's word. The government of such a people, is not a mob government. If any prove themselves destitute of such a character, they are to be put out of the church. None but a society thus preserved pure, can be fit for a scriptural mode of government. They who are truly Christians in their spirit will feel that they are not at liberty to govern as they please, but are under law to Christ, to whom we must all give an account. If a gentleman think it beneath him to submit to such a government, the

Scriptures know nothing of such a gentleman. He would only shew the truth of the Scripture, which says, "how hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!"

We return again to our inquiry, where now is the priestcraft of the Bible? But the infidel takes a new turn, and says, "This which has been presented to view is all pure theory. The thing has never been seen in practice. It is all a mere golden dream." If we were to admit this, we still ask, whose fault is it? Why do not you realize it? If you own that the theory is good, then reduce it to practice yourself. You will find it much easier than to create Owen's Utopia. You are at full liberty to try: thanks to the freedom which Christianity has produced. For even the deistical Hume has taught you, that you owe civil liberty to the English puritans and dissenters. If, instead of trying how the liberal theory of the Scriptures will work, you persist in charging them with priestcraft, you must stand convicted of defamation before the whole world.

But though one good answer is, with a fair and honourable man, enough, we can give you a dozen. You say the theory of the Christian church, as sketched in the Scriptures, though unimpeachable, is a mere poet's dream, that was never realized among living men. But you must, if you have common sense, know that this is false. For how have we learned the theory? Was it not deduced from a narrative of facts? This is the simple, palpable, straight forward way in which the Scriptures teach. They deal not in abstract theories which may puzzle, and bewilder, and deceive. They give plain matters of fact for plain matter-of-fact men. To pretend that the church polity of the Bible is a mere theory, is to act like a man who first gets his idea of a steam engine from seeing one at work, and then goes and says, it is only the ingenious speculation of a theoretical mechanic. The greater part of those who

understand the true nature of Christian church government, acquire their knowledge, as the larger part of mankind learn the mechanism of a watch, by seeing and using one.

The theory has, in all its essential parts, been reduced to practice, by thousands of Christians, in various parts of the world. During the times of the apostles, who received the idea from Jesus Christ, the legislator and sovereign of the church, numerous societies were formed upon the true model, in all the principal cities of Europe and Asia. We have credible histories of those churches, and can see the working of the system immediately after the death of the sacred writers.

We grant that the system was soon corrupted, and that, at length, the whole character of the Christian church was transformed, from Christian liberty, to ecclesiastical tyranny, and from honest sincerity, to priestly craft. But this the inspired apostles foretold.

When Constantine, the first Roman emperor who professed himself a Christian, took the church into his own hands, he moulded it after the model of the civil state. Then, Christian bishops were transformed into temporal lords, and gradations of rank were introduced into the church, to assimilate it to the state, till, at length, a pope at Rome became the rival of an emperor at Constantinople. The state said to the church, "Do you support me and I will support you, and between us both we shall rule the people both in body and soul." Thus arose the priestcraft of which you complain. Yet, remember that this was not Christ's church, but the emperor's. The author of Christianity is no more answerable for this corruption, than you would be for the state of a society which you had modelled according to reason, and justice, and liberty, after some powerful intruder had revolutionised and remodelled it, to answer his own arbitrary and selfish ends.

That corrupt men could not leave the Christian church as they found it, is a proof that it was too pure and heavenly for their taste. If this plant of Paradise languished and withered in our soil, it does but shew that it was a native of a purer clime. That its decline was foretold, is a sign of the sincerity and prescience of its Author. Mahomet, observing the divisions of Christians into sects, resolved to form a religion of perfect unity. The Koran contains no predictions of divisions in Islamism. But the ashes of the impostor were scarcely cold, before the schism of Omar and Ali arose; and now the Turks, who are of the former sect, say that the Persians, who are Mahomedans of the sect of Ali, will, at the day of doom, be asses for the very Jews to ride upon to the judgment seat. But the corruptions of the Christian church are foretold in our Scriptures; and though it is now matter of astonishment that Christianity should ever have degenerated into popery, this is as clearly seen in the prophecies of Scripture as in the records of history. Thus the very corruptions of religion prove its truth.

But even when you point to the darkest ages, when priestcraft was most rampant, you are inexcusable if you condemn religion on this account; for you ought to know, and those who have read history must know, that there was always a discerning few who saw through the imposture which had been practised under the Christian name. They struggled to restore pure Christianity, at the hazard of their reputation, their ease, their fortunes, their liberties, and their lives. You condemn Christians as persecutors; but you ought to know, that the true Christians were the persecuted. If the fires of Smithfield disgraced the name, they glorified the thing. The martyrs always appealed to the Scriptures, while their persecutors appealed to the laws of the state and the decrees of priests. The

blood that was shed for pure scriptural religion, will cry to heaven against you, if you persist in condemning Christianity for the sake of corruptions which were scarcely less hostile to it than is infidelity itself.

If, in our own country, there are many things which give to your charge of priestcraft the semblance of truth, you know there are also many things which prove it false. If some ministers have lordly titles, and immense revenues, and civil power, there are decided Christians who condemn these things as severely as you can. You cannot be ignorant, that there are multitudes who denounce all state interference in religion as antichristian. These have formed voluntary societies, which appeal to no laws but those of Christ, wield no arms but arguments, and are supported by no revenues but the free-will offerings of the heart. You must be sensible that, among these societies, ministers labour for the diffusion of Christianity, uninfluenced by the love of filthy lucre or of worldly rank. If they sought merely their own interests, they would instantly turn aside to secular callings, which would repay far easier labours with far richer rewards.

There is one form of Christianity, which you must be acquainted with, that puts to shame your charge of priestcraft. The society of Friends, usually called Quakers, exists, not only in this country, but in the United States of America, where you may know that William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania, in which this body of Christians forms the great mass of the population. Among these Christians, there are no priests, none who wear a distinguishing dress, or are called by ecclesiastical titles, or assume the exclusive right of teaching or officiating in the church. You know their opposition to tithes, their refusal to pay church rates, and their steady protests against all state interference in religion. If then,

reason, or candour, or love of truth and justice, dwell within your breast, must not these honourable qualities compel you to say, "Religion and priestcraft cannot be identical; for here is a large and sensible class of religionists that is as hostile to a priesthood as any infidel could wish?" Should you not have said, long ere now, "I will rethink my thoughts, and see whether I may not be right in my detestation of priestcraft, and wrong in my rejection of revealed religion?"

You are also equally guilty of a wilful inattention to evidence that bursts upon you from another quarter. That there is one mighty empire in the earth where Christianity exists and flourishes, unsalaried by the state, and unsupported by the secular arm, is notorious. The United States of America ought to have attracted your attention the more, because it is known that these States were founded chiefly by a religious people, who fled from this country, before liberty of conscience was recognized as the birthright of Englishmen. In that country there is no dominant hierarchy; there are no tithes, no compulsory church rates, and no civil preference on account of religious opinions. There a man may be an avowed infidel, and yet enjoy all the privileges of a citizen. And what is the consequence? You, who are so greedy of premature triumphs, boast that if there were pure absolute freedom of opinion, there would soon be no Christianity; for infidelity would be the rod of Aaron, that would swallow up all others. But look at America, where infidelity has long been at liberty to do its worst. What has it done? What is it doing? It enjoys the mortification of seeing the triumphs of the cross. For there, where the presumptuous arm of Uzzah is not laid upon the ark, the arm of Jehovah is visibly stretched out for its protection and support. There is not a country under heaven where Christianity is so manifestly proved to be omnipotent and divine, or

where infidelity looks so puny and so mean. The Spirit of God is there making the spirits of men bow before the cross of Christ, as the leaves of the forest wave before the wind. There it is demonstrated, to the conviction of the world, that state establishments, compulsory laws, rich priests, and religious persecutions, are not the strength nor the glory of Christianity, but her weakness and her bane. Christians, who know where lie their true interests, say, "Give us a fair field and no favour, and we will conquer the world. That era which you invoke for your triumphs, we seek to accelerate, that we may enjoy ours. The age of liberty, when you think there will be no Christians, is that golden age when we know there will be no infidels. *We* once conquered, when all the world was against us. *You* could never exist, till Christians had purchased *your* freedom by *their* blood. When freedom shall be perfect, Christ will bind the last infidel a willing captive in silken bonds."

But as I see you turn with averted countenance from America, and complain that weak eyes cannot bear a strong light, I will relieve you from your torture. You shall look another way. Glance round the world, if you will; it is all before you. But what ails you? Your eyes are as restless as those of an Albinos. But, come, I know why you glance from east to west, from south to north, and can repose nowhere. You see the world full of Christian missions, and you think I wickedly suffered you to look away from America, that I might give you, not relief, but change of pain.

Now for the argument from Christian missions. In the first place, you know, that when the preachers of the Gospel quit Christendom, they abandon all those props without which you say they cannot stand, and throw themselves upon the evidences of their religion, and the divinity of its spirit, its power to illuminate the mind and captivate the heart. In



the next place, you know that instead of the factitious aids which you say unfairly attend Christianity here; missionaries have to encounter obstructions, which as unfairly array themselves against her, in foreign lands. In the last place, the religion of the Scriptures has, in spite of every difficulty, triumphed over every other system, in all quarters of the globe.

But we will select one country where Christianity has had the world at her feet, to do with it whatever she pleased. In some of the islands of the South sea, the whole population has abandoned its idols and become Christian. Kings and chiefs have laid their sceptres and their swords at the Redeemer's feet. At this crisis, the missionaries had the country at command. They might have moulded society to any form they pleased to adopt. Here was a golden moment to play the part of the Jesuits in Paraguay, and set up for a royal priesthood, to tithe the country, and bow the necks of kings to the yoke of priests.

Well, how did they improve the golden moment? They have preserved the church distinct from the state. Leaving the people in full possession of their civil liberties, the missionaries have thrown themselves on the voluntary support of the natives. Future generations will there say, "Christian ministers taught our fathers to frame and to establish a code of laws, which secured the freedom both of the body and the mind." Does this look like priestcraft? Is there no evidence of honour and sincerity in such conduct? Reverse the case. Suppose the missionaries had seized the opportunity to enthrone themselves in power, and enrich themselves with the wealth of the country, would you not have deafened us with the roar of priestcraft! priestcraft! And what could we have replied? Then what can you now reply? Do not opposite effects require contrary causes? Must not every sincere inquirer after truth acknowledge, that there are at least some Christian

ministers who have a disinterested zeal for religion, and are decided foes to priestly rule?

In the north of the Pacific ocean, where Captain Cook fell, American missionaries have succeeded in producing a similar change, and there have been put to a severer test; for Catholic missionaries, sent out from France, during the reign of Charles the tenth, and the Jesuits, have come to interfere in reaping the fields which others have sown. Now mark what follows. Did the Protestant missionaries persuade the king and the chiefs of the Sandwich islands to prohibit the landing of the Catholics, or the opening of their commission from the pope? No, the Jesuits have been left at liberty to do what they could. It is a fair battle between knowledge and superstition; between the love of the cross in the heart, and the image of the cross on the breast; between the efforts of Protestants to enlighten the mind by the reading of the Scriptures, and the labours of the Catholics to dazzle the senses by splendid show and gorgeous pantomime, which might supersede the necessity of an instructed mind and a renovated heart.

Have I not now a right to say, "I have proved to demonstration, that the pure religion of the Bible, Christianity as it came from the hands of its author, is as remote from priestcraft as infidelity itself can be?" But, after having stood so long upon the defensive, you must be cowards indeed if you refuse me the right to wheel round and become, in my turn, an assailant. Has infidelity no priestcraft? Has she no ignorant gaping multitude that swallow with open mouth the supposed inspiration of her prophets? Is there no spot on this earth, or even in our country, not far from the banks of her Thames, where arrant nonsense and notorious falsehoods, that would excite among the honest and well informed, bursts of laughter, or hisses of contempt, are welcomed with shouts of applause? Are infidels asked for no contributions? Do their priests live upon the air, or

support themselves upon their own private fortunes, while they exert their lives for the welfare of their flocks? Where are their contributions for the poor? Their societies for visiting and relieving the indigent sick? Their schools for the instruction of children? Their asylums for the widow and the orphan? Their missions to rescue the benighted heathen from the worship of blocks, the yoke of priests, and the orgies of cannibals? What! Is infidelity all personal gratification, both on the part of the teachers and the taught? Have the priests the command of their temples? Have the people no power over them? Can they be turned out as a flock of sheep, without power of retort, to expel the teachers when convicted of ignorance, or chicanery, or crime? Alas! poor infidelity, she has brandished the sword till her own fingers bleed. She has cried, stop thief! till the honest passengers see the trick, and turn round to seize her as the caitiff. The charge of priestcraft has been hurled at Christianity, but has recoiled from her seven-fold shield upon the head of her accuser, and there he lies stunned with the blow.

But ere I part with infidels, I must take liberty to say, when I think of your opportunities for knowing better, I tremble for you. The canker of your infidelity eats out the core of your blessings, and turns them into curses. Instead of rejoicing that you were born in Britain, you may have reason to wish you had drawn your first breath and spent all your days in Spain. There an infidel is comparatively an innocent being. For where no Bible can be read, and nothing but Popery can be seen, if secret infidelity abounds, who can wonder? But *their* unbelief and *yours* have a different character. If they are not innocent, you are ten-fold more guilty. They have too little light, and you have too much, too much to admit of any palliation for your crime, or any mitigation of your doom. Now, the blaze of day provokes your enmity: beware lest you wish, at last,

that you had been born amidst the thickest shades of mental night. For of him to whom little was given, little will be required ; but to whom much was given, of him more will be required. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who heard the Saviour's words, and had been informed of his mighty and benevolent works.

In vain you will plead at the tribunal of the Omniscient, that you saw priests fattening on the spoils of the people, and ruling them with a rod of iron in the name of Christ. Will not the judge say to you, "and did you not see others who lived in poverty and humility and excess of labours, to make known my name ? Did not your own judgment and conscience tell you, that the best things were invariably perverted by bad men, to suit their own selfish ends ? Had you been influenced by any sincere desire after truth, would you not have inquired farther into my religion, to know whether that which excited your prejudice and inflamed your enmity was the revelation of the Bible, or a base counterfeit ?"

If you reply, "then the coiners who issued the base money, to deceive and rob the public, should be punished as well as we;" who says they will not ? If there are any for whom I tremble more than for infidels, they are the men who, under the Christian name, have made infidels, and who, by the perversion of religion, furnish you with a palliation, if not a justification of your crime. And do you not know, (it is your own fault if you do not,) that there is no book so severe upon wicked priests as the Bible ? Have you never read or heard of such texts as these ? Malachi i. 6. to chap. ii. 13.

In fact, many of the priests to whom you point as your arguments against revealed religion, are our evidences against infidelity. They were not your opponents, but your secret confederates, your brother infidels. Nay, do not start to find yourself in such

company, and say it cannot be true. Many of the priests in France were known to be infidels, and the infidelity of that country is the work of their hands. Voltaire, Rousseau, and their companions would have stormed in vain, had they not been aided by the sappers and miners. The priests of Spain are known to be almost universally deists or atheists. Behold your beloved brethren, your fellow soldiers, in your unholy crusade against the Bible.

But you spurn them and exclaim, "they are hypocrites, and we are at least honest infidels." Hush, do not boast too loudly, lest some should be roused up to look out for the men in masks among you, should strip off the vizard and lead out their naked faces to the gaze of the world, telling to all what is known to some, that infidels have said, "We know the truth of the Bible as well as you do; but every man must get his living; if he cannot get it in one way, he must in another."

But that which condemns the priests is far enough from excusing you. Had priests manufactured the Bible, would it have contained such texts as you have heard? Would not an impartial arbitrator say that priests had as much reason to pronounce the Bible the work of priest haters, as you to call it the machinery of priests, to keep the world in awe.

Whichever way you turn, you see nothing but confusion to your cause. Fly, then, fly, infidel, with wicked priests, who may well accompany you in your flight, to the cross for mercy. For the clouds thicken round you; the thunder roars louder and still louder to waken your slumbering conscience, and forked lightnings flash confutation in your face, while you cry priestcraft! to accuse another, and see yourself, with the priests, arraigned, judged, condemned, and tottering over the fiery gulf of perdition. There is but a step between you and death, and but a moment for you to take that step. Let it be towards the cross of Christ.

and you may be saved. But if it be a step further from this refuge, that last step, like another drop in an already too full cup, which makes it run over, will convey you beyond the bounds of mercy and of hope, where all is for ever lost.

These warnings and expostulations as they drop from my lips, or perhaps from those of any other mortal, you may despise. But,—though discouraged and afflicted, we are not in despair. Christians have a resource which infidels know not. We have heard the voice from the eternal throne : “ Trust in me at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before me. I am a refuge for you.” I, though no more a priest than the rest of my Christian brethren, will say, with an inspired prophet, “ God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. But I will shew you the good and the right way.” With all the royal priesthood who offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, I will ask in the name of that everlasting priest of our profession, that you may not persist in despising the only name whereby you can be saved, and so perish in your own delusions, with the aggravated doom of those who have taught others to blaspheme; but that you may see your error, and may fall at the feet of that one priest “ who is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

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The whole of the preceding Lecture was not delivered from the pulpit. For those who had clamoured for free discussion, seeing how little they had gained by it, on the two former occasions, came, in overwhelming masses, with an evident determination to prevent all useful instruction or real discussion, by indecent noise or brute force. After much endurance of vexatious interruption, the Lec-

turer recommenced with an explicit declaration that he should attempt the continuance of the discourse only once more; for if fresh disturbance were created, he should dissolve the assembly. This warning not being heeded, the indecent clamour rendered it necessary abruptly to close the service. Scarcely two-thirds of the Lecture, therefore, can be recognized by the audience. The remaining portion, it may be seen, was essential to the due improvement of the former. All discussion was unhappily precluded; though it had been hoped that, on this occasion, a more powerful and beneficial effect would have been secured.





## INFIDELS CHALLENGED TO SUBMIT THEIR OWN SYSTEM TO EXAMINATION.

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ISAIAH xli. 21.

*“Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.”*

JEREMIAH viii. 9.

*“Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?”*

CHRISTIANS, when contending with infidels, usually keep on the defensive. If it be asked why? we answer, “Because we have something to defend, and something worth defending.” The heroic defence of their freedom, which the Greeks maintained against the Persian despots, has set the stamp of inestimable worth on liberty, and conferred on it everlasting renown. We cannot see another exhausting his last energies, to keep possession of that which is attempted to be wrung from him, without feeling a conviction, that it is, at least in his own estimation, inexpressibly dear. When Christians “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” let infidels learn that *we* know its value, if they do not. The honour and usefulness of bearing this testimony to the value of divine revelation, are worth all the pains and cost expended on its defence.

Still it may be asked, “Why confine yourselves to a defensive warfare? Why not turn round upon your assailants, and carry the war into the heart of

their camp? Would it not be good policy to avail yourselves of the advantages which always attend an attack? For the position of the defender is in many respects inferior to that of the assailant. The former, fixed to one spot, is chilled by his own quiescence, restricted in his efforts, and confined almost to the use of the shield; while the man who attacks may rove over a wide field, choose his own time and place and weapons, and by the very rush of the onset, heat his courage and augment the force of the shock, as a falling body is increased in impetus in proportion as it is accelerated in time."

Of this we are not ignorant. When, therefore, we have defended ourselves, successfully, as we think, and driven the enemy from our ramparts, we are not indisposed to change places with the assailant. "Then, why do you not?" it may be said. We answer, "Because we can find nothing to attack. When we sally forth from our citadel, to pursue the foe, we look around and cry, 'Where is he?' there is nothing to be seen, but a cloud of dust, or a few flying Cossacks. However triumphant in our defence against those who are so fierce to attack, when we wheel round to pursue the foe, we are mortified to find that we have nothing to contend with but shadows, or the flying fragments of a wreck."

Infidels boast "we seek nothing but truth." But who are infidels? Unbelievers. It is a negative term. It means those who do not believe. Taken then in its full extent, it signifies those who believe nothing. As they call themselves by this name, it expresses a contradiction; for they cannot honestly take this appellation without believing that it belongs to them; and then the matter stands thus: We are the men who believe—what?—that we believe nothing. There they stand, then, at once believing something and nothing.

But it may be said, the term unbeliever, or

infidel, like every other, must be taken according to its connection; and as it is used in opposition to a believer in divine revelation, it signifies one who does not believe in revelation. Very well; we will take it in that sense. It includes, then, a large class, comprising not only all the wicked, but all the babes, all the idiots, and all the brutes, for these do not believe in divine revelation.

But, restricting the term to human beings, and to those who have arrived at maturity, and are in the possession of reason, it includes not one sect, but many. Atheists are infidels, and so are sceptics, and so are Deists; and of Deists again there are many varieties. Infidels, therefore, taken as a genus, have not found what they *shall* believe, but what they shall not. They are not agreed, except in disagreeing with Christians. Their creed, like their name, is a negation, it expresses nothing positive, but something negative; that is to say, a something which is nothing.

Who, therefore, can wonder that we find it difficult to attack such a shadowy foe? For when we challenge them to present their own system, and to submit their creed to examination, they reply, "Creed! we have none. Convict our system of falsehood, if you can." Cowardly heroes! Rout and ruin and desperation make them bold. They are like the gypsies before an invading army: having neither towns to be taken, nor houses to be burned, nor property to lose, they say, "who can disperse or plunder us?" Thus the very emptiness and destitution and vagrancy of infidelity, make them difficult to attack. *They* could find their foe, for he presented a compact front; *they* could take their aim, for he laid bare his breast; *they* had something to inflame their hopes of plunder, for he had riches to be seized. But as for us; when we thought to march to battle, we had to go on a voyage of discovery; when we ought to have been

using our arms, we have to employ our telescope; and when we hope we have begun the conflict, we are liable to have our ardour checked by the confounding information, "that is not the foe."

Surely the days of chivalry are not past. We have still to sally forth in quest of our giants, and, like the knight of La Mancha, are in danger of meeting nothing but windmills; for infidels shift round to all points of the compass, and he who began by professing to belong to one species of the genus, ends with taking refuge under the shield of another. We must, however, comfort ourselves with the thought that we can and will form some definite notions, if they cannot or will not. We will class them as animals in natural history, and dissect them as for the purposes of comparative anatomy, and shew them up as the curiosities, or monstrosities rather, of a museum. There are then, three classes of them, including—Sceptics, who believe nothing; Atheists, who believe there is no God; and Deists, who, admitting there is a God, deny a revelation.

I. Sceptics, who profess universal uncertainty, not knowing what to believe, form one class of infidels. I suspect that they all, at times, take refuge in this chaos. Many, however, declare that this is their fixed region, their adopted, if not their native home. They sometimes frankly confess that they are bewildered, and know not what to think. Well, if we can give them credit for this, we must very heartily pity them for it. But why, we take liberty to ask, attempt to give others the vertigo? They might surely keep their giddiness to themselves, and not, like children, take hold of our hands, to compel us to dance in their ring, that the whole world might seem to reel, because our heads are dizzy. When we were children, this was sport; but since we have become men, we like to stand steady, and not to feel the world reel beneath our feet. If *they*

cannot help it, and need to be cupped, that is no reason why the blood should be forced to our heads.

For let us tell you, that real scepticism is torment, active scepticism is contradiction, and thorough scepticism is madness.

Real hearty sceptics are in a state of torment. By this description of the persons it may be seen that I conceive of an opposite class who are not as sceptical as they pretend to be. For infidelity has its hypocrites. There is a left handed hypocrisy, that pretends to more thorough paced wickedness or ignorance, than it has been able to reach. If you watch narrowly those who profess to be sceptics, you will find that not one in ten of them have reached the mark and prize of their low calling. Like men pretending to madness, who cannot prevent the symptoms of reason, in some unguarded moments, from peeping out; these hypocritical sceptics often shew that they believe more than they like to confess. The evidence which they spurned as good for nothing, when adduced in behalf of religion, they will embrace as if it were as strong as we think proofs from holy writ, when they want a support for some temporal interest, or a sanction for some sensual lust. The same men will regard the same proofs as both strong and weak, wise and foolish, worthy of philosophers, and beneath children or fools. Such is the consistency, such the sincerity of the greater part of the scepticism in the world.

But if there are any real sceptics, they must exist in a state of torment. They do not fully believe there is no God; for if they did, they would be, not sceptics, but atheists. No; they only say, we cannot be satisfied that there is a God. Then they must be tortured with what may be called an infinity of uncertainty. "Is there," they must continually cry, "one eternal, infinite, almighty, om-

niscient Being, who made me, and therefore holds me in his hands, subject in the most abject degree, to his sovereign pleasure? Or is there, instead of this infinity of being, a pure, absolute, eternal nothing? Sometimes, I say, Suppose there should be a God! And then the overwhelming idea seizes me like a giant, takes possession of my whole being, and absorbs all my powers, compelling me to exclaim, If deity is any thing, it is every thing. Then I shake off the notion again, and find, instead of the vast idea, a blank; and my spirit, which I hoped would exult at its escape from the giant grasp, does but shudder at the solitude created by the disappearance of the eternal *All*; and I feel myself in a vacuum where I cannot draw my breath. But I am soon hurled back again to the other pole. Thus I am tossed from infinity to nihility, from nihility to infinity; from the plenum to the vacuum, from the vacuum to the plenum; from the supposition of a being who demands all the homage of my soul, to the contradictory cry, 'What if instead of this there should be—— nothing?' Oh! that I could come to some fixed satisfactory conclusion, and know which of these two opposites is true! For though I tremble at the possibility that I may find there is a God, lest I should find, too, that I do not stand right with him; yet as long as I admit that I am not sure, and therefore may, some day or other, be compelled to come to the conclusion that there is such a being, the possibility is to me almost as tormenting as the certainty. Tired of the boundless uncertainty, sometimes I fly to one conclusion and sometimes to the opposite. Now my restless spirit, as a wretched orphan that would fain open its arms to embrace a parent, yields for a moment to the thought, that I have an intelligent Creator; but, then, instantly I think I see him frown, and feel that I shrink back from the idea, and what I once thought was too good to be true—



a smiling God, I now hope to find too bad to be true—a frowning God. But to what do I fly, when I fly from God? To a horrible vacuity. To an emptiness that makes even a sceptic shudder. Thus, while my mind is distracted with contrary opinions, my heart is torn by conflicting emotions. Often I say, I wish I could believe there is a God; but more often exclaim, I wish I could *prove* there is none. Yet this latter wish recoils upon my soul as a thunder bolt, and compels me to exclaim, ‘and what should I gain by the extinction of deity?’ Infinite loss! Nay, I reply, then there would be none to punish me. No, replies conscience, nor to reward you neither. Suppose you were to find a pardoning God, would not that be a discovery worth making, at any cost?

“Oh that I knew where I could find him! For inquire after him I feel I must, if not with honest research and a willing mind, still amidst the torments of infidelity and the self-condemnation of a prejudiced heart. If, for a moment, I set myself to sincere investigation, I say, If there is a God in the universe, I will find him. Were there a spot where he demonstrates his being to full conviction, I would crawl upon my hands and knees to reach it, though it were at the utmost distance. But then, I hear the believers in a God say, ‘they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move, and have our being.’”

Such would be the torment of a sincere sceptic, with regard to the being of God.

Think, next, what would be the state of such a one on the question of Divine Revelation. He would say. In my distracting uncertainty about the existence of a God, I exclaim, if there is such a being, why does he not shew himself, that we may be sure of him? But then I felt the question flung back upon me.

“ why do not you examine whether he has or not ? What is that Revelation which you spurn, but at least a profession of that for which you say you long ? Would not this, if true, be a summary settlement of the question, which has so long tormented you ? Examine the Bible, and if that prove true, there is a God.” But the real sceptic indignantly replies, Oh the Bible ! Who can tell whether that is true or false ? Who but children or fools would take all that for certain ? Yet a voice within says, but do you not make that an excuse for never examining it ? And so, because you are uncertain, you never inquire. But were you sincere in your search after God, you would say, I will go thoroughly into the claims of this book ; for here I shall do two things at once : I shall come to a conclusion concerning both deism and atheism. Here I may find, if the book should prove true, the God after whom I sought in vain. Here I may discover him, not by metaphysical speculation, which I suspect will never lead me to perfect satisfaction ; but by ocular demonstration, or by palpable facts ; so that eyes, and ears, and hands, may recognize the present deity. If I am blind, or in a dark room, I can tell that there is some person there, when I hear his voice, speaking to me, and feel his hand laid upon me.

But when I open the book, all the force of my scepticism comes over me. I am awed with its grandeur, and offended with its meanness. I am struck with its peculiarities, and shocked at its absurdities. Absurdities did I call them ? I am a sceptic even to my own scepticism, and half tremble, even when I attempt to laugh at the Bible. I spurn the idea of a universal deluge, and make myself merry at Noah and his large family in the ark ; but when I look round upon the earth, and still more when I look into it, I turn grave, or even pale again, and

exclaim, "There could hardly have been stronger proofs of a deluge, even if there had been one."

When I go on to the history of the Jews, I cry, there never could have been such a people; but the words are scarcely out of my mouth, ere I meet one of that very nation, and the Jew as he crosses my path, seems to taunt me with the reply, "Ah! but here we are." The rites which I pronounce ridiculous, or incredible, I see them practising. To keep up my scepticism, I join in the vulgar ridicule at a Jew; but I defeat my own purpose; for I am reminded that I am doing the last thing I should have wished or intended, fulfilling the prophecies that declared, 'They should be a bye word and a hissing.'

When I turn to the New Testament, I am shocked with the story of an incarnate God. But when I look at Jesus Christ, I cannot bring myself to say that he was a mere man. If I attempt to extricate myself from the embarrassment he creates, by saying, it is all an invention, there never was such a person, I am struck dumb, with the inquiry, "And who invented this character?" It is beyond all Grecian, all Roman eloquence, or poetry; and yet it is a story of humble Jews. But would Jews invent a story to damn themselves to everlasting fame? Would they, if they could; could they if they would, invent a character of excellence so consummate as never before presented itself to the human mind, only to cover themselves with the infamy of treating him, who far surpassed all the wise and the holy, as if he were the vilest of the vile? But, when I think of his death, I stumble at his cross; and yet feel that he there triumphs over me, as if he were on a throne. O the distractions of scepticism! The death of Ravilliac torn to pieces by four horses fastened to his limbs, to drag him to the four points of the compass! It is mercy com-

pared to the life I live! I am every day dragged hither and thither, and feel as if I were torn limb from limb.

If real scepticism is torment, active scepticism is contradiction. For the sceptic may well hide his doubts, lest he should make others as miserable as himself. "I will keep my doubts to myself," he might say, "and not seek to torment others; one such miserable wretch at a time is enough." If he studies to shake our faith, he pours confusion on himself. He then virtually says, "I know not what to believe; but I know that what you believe is false." He would have us think as he does, and when we ask how that is, he says, "I cannot tell." Sceptics own that they know not what is truth, then how know they but we have found it? How can they tell that our creed is an error? It is only by knowing some truths that we can judge of any falsehoods. It is the straight rule which shews what is crooked. And yet many of these sceptics are the most active opponents of divine revelation. They have always a sneer ready for those who believe the Bible, and when fairly met, they excuse themselves from the difficult duty of giving reasons, by insinuating that every thing is uncertain: no man knows what is truth! Of this, indeed, they are certain!

But universal scepticism is madness. If a man knows not what to think about any thing, and is really in doubt of every thing, he does not believe that fire will burn, or water drown him. He will plunge himself into either, without fear. But, to make compensation for this, whatever may be the consequences, he will not be much concerned; for he will be uncertain whether he is burning or drowning; for he is sure of nothing. Could such a man escape a madhouse?

But we may be told, that it is only in religion he is a sceptic. And why in religion only? Can he have common sense in all things else, and abjure it

in religion alone? Is there not reason to suspect that there is some disgraceful cause, when a man has one rule of judgment in all things else, and another in this one affair of religion? Is it not because in other things he is sincere; but with regard to religion, a hypocrite? Where the interests or the pleasure of the body are concerned, he is rational; because he has a real regard for the things of this life; but where the interests of the soul and its duty to God are to be maintained, *there*, being obstinately disinclined, *there*, finding no other way of escape, he will take refuge in the insanity of scepticism.

There is now, however, a peculiar modification of scepticism in fashion. "We will believe nothing but what we can see," is the flippant cry of those who would be thought wonderfully wise, too wise to be religious. These men then do not believe that there is such a thing in existence as the crown of their own head, or the back of their neck; unless they are endued with a new species of second sight, and have seen that part of their own bodies, which no others have yet found out the way of seeing in themselves. And when these wiseacres are in the dark, they, of course, do not believe they have any bodies at all; and as they never believe they have any souls, because they cannot see them; they are thus compelled to maintain that they have no existence; that is, they themselves believe that there is no such thing as themselves to believe or disbelieve.

But they will say, perhaps, that when they cannot see, they can feel. To be sure they can; and why sight alone should be exempted from the proscription they pronounce on the other senses, no sane man can see. But when they fly to feeling, to supply the absence of sight, what becomes of their sage declaration, that they will believe nothing but what they can see? Enough, however, of the madness of the sceptic. With such a man the only

proper argument is a strait waistcoat, the only college for their education is the Surrey University, called Bedlam. I turn to the next class of infidels.

II. Atheists. These declare that they have made up their minds on one great question, and they know that there is no God. They have proved a negative. The existence of such a monster as an atheist has been doubted, and we know that many who have formerly been called by that name have been calumniated; but now we see men who, glorying in their shame, say with unblushing front, "I am an atheist." Look at him. It is not every day that you see such an object.

This is the form that infidelity is now assuming. Most infidels are either on the verge, or in the gulf of atheism. When infidelity wore the more decent garb of deism, unbelievers were told what it would come to, and warned that their rejection of divine revelation would lead them to atheism. This they resented as an insult, and exclaiming against the prejudices and calumnies of Christians, declared they were as firm believers in a God as we are. But great is the truth, and it will prevail. The disgraceful secret has come out, and it is now seen why men reject the Bible. It is because they have rejected its author, God.

Well, this is honourable to revelation. If pearls must be trampled under feet, it is fit that these should be the feet of swine. If the Bible is to be trampled upon, I am consoled, when I see that it is by the foot of an atheist. When I hear a voice cry "no Bible," I am horrified; but when I hear the same voice, cry "no God," I take comfort, and say, "O, it is only an atheist!" Only an atheist! however, some may say. Time was when an atheist was considered a prodigy. One such melancholy abortion was enough to brand a continent or an age with a mark of infamy and horror! How is it that an atheist is now become a common thing; and men

say, "O, it is only an atheist?" These are the fruits of what is *called* the age of Reason, and what is proved to be the age of Infidelity, by abounding in atheism.

Believers in revelation may here learn to beware of turning deists; if they are not willing to go all the lengths of the horrid road, till they become atheists. For they may see how feeble is their hold of the being of a God, when they let go the Bible. They may see too *why* they let go the Bible; it is because they have begun to lose their hold of God. A real, rational, firm belief in the existence and attributes of the Supreme Being will make a man receive the volume of revelation, and never let it go. The book of God and the God of the book go together. The Bible will maintain the honour of God, and God will maintain the honour of the Bible, in spite of deists and of atheists. Atheism, like all other hostility to God, will be compelled, in spite of itself, to promote the honour of God. Atheism is the child of Deism; but the child, like a true monstrous birth, shall devour its own parent. The horrors of atheism will teach men to abhor, not only herself, but the parent that brought her forth. Men will be afraid to start in a career that leads to such a gulf. What atheism will do, has been so well seen in France, that there deism too is beginning to give way before a rational belief of the Scriptures. It has been seen that a society of atheists cannot exist. It is not merely a rope of sand. It is the sand of the desert driven by a hurricane into a chaos. The enemies who most oppose these divine writings are reduced to the mortifying necessity of fulfilling and proving the Scriptures, which say that "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; but the wrath of men shall praise God, and the remainder of their wrath he shall restrain. For God's judgments are a great deep."

The atheists themselves are not one sect, but



many. What do they believe, who believe not in God? How shall we argue with them, in defence of our faith, if we know not theirs? For a principal resource, in contending for the truth, lies in appealing to men's own acknowledged principles. When we can shew that they have already admitted in some of their own opinions, that very principle which they condemn in ours, we can at least stop their mouths, if not convert them from their errors.

But what does an atheist believe? According to the universal notions of sane men, an atheist denies the connexion between cause and effect, or antecedent and consequent, so that we can prove no one thing from another. Especially he denies that any adaptation of means to ends is sufficient to prove an intelligent designing cause. For a whole universe of means adapted to produce certain ends, is with him no proof of a universal designer. If then the assassin load the pistol, prime it, take a deliberate aim, draw the trigger, fire, and wound the atheist dangerously, a jury of atheists could not, on their own principles, convict the assassin of intention to murder, for they have denied that the employment of any means can prove design, or even the existence of a designer.

Is not argument thrown away upon an atheist? If he is sincere, what he wants is medicine. If the physician should succeed with him, the logician or divine will not be needed, at least not for the cure of this speculative atheism.

Sincere! however, many will exclaim, every action of an atheist's life belies his creed, and shews him to be a hypocrite. Nothing proves this more clearly than his perpetual shuffling, to avoid conviction. When we argue with him on one view of atheism, he exclaims, "O, all that is irrelevant; for our atheism is of another kind, to which your arguments do not apply." When we meet him on another ground, still we have the same reply.

We challenge the atheist to bring forward his system, and give his proofs on which he rests his cause. But he is too wary for that, too much afraid of being compelled to own that there is a God. Every honest man, who has adopted sentiments, from a sincere conviction of their truth, will boldly avow them, giving his reasons for their adoption, willing to be confuted, if he is in error, and wishing to diffuse his sentiments, only because he is convinced of their truth. Concealment and shuffling are proofs of imposture. The atheist knows what the servants of God believe, their creed is before the world. All the use the atheist makes of this is, not to imitate the honesty of it; but to learn how to attack it with most hope of success, and how to conceal his own particular form of atheism, that he may most effectually evade argument and escape confutation.

Does the atheist think that the world is eternal? If this is his creed, let him avow it, that we may at least have the melancholy consolation of crushing it to atoms, grinding it to powder, to be blown, by the breath of ridicule and honest contempt, to the winds of heaven.

An eternal world! Yes, there is one, indeed, in the sense of an eternity, a *parte post*, or a future eternity. But eternity, a *parte ante*, or a past eternity, ascribed to this world, would be laughable, if it were not a perversion of things too horrible for ridicule. This world existed from eternity! Who that has but touched the cup of history with the edge of his lips is ignorant of the recent date of this world, and of all the nations and all the things which it contains? Who can refrain from looking with pity on such atheists, and saying, "You and your world eternal! You are of yesterday, and know nothing!" For all that know any thing of history, know that it confirms revelation. It not only proves the creation of the world, but proves that the date assigned to it in Scripture is the true one. But

amidst a mob of such atheists, is there one historian? Those who have written the history of mankind have been of another school.

But some are not quite so finished madmen, or idiots, as to maintain that this world is eternal: they suppose that it came into being, and if you ask them how, they will say it came by chance. But what a waste of breath, or of paper and ink would it be, to attempt to argue with such men! For they would think of course (if you could profane the term thinking by applying it to such men) that the very sounds that convey the argument to the ear, and the marks which express it to the eye, came by chance, and were no proof that any living intelligence was arguing with them.

There are, however, even among atheists, some that have sense and shame enough left to own that chance is nothing but a name for an unknown cause, or in other words a term that serves as a mask to hide our ignorance. To what, then, does the atheist, who is ashamed to worship the god, chance, ascribe the world?

Does the atheist ascribe all things to nature? Yes, many of them roar aloud, "all things are by nature. She is the only universal cause." So they own a she God. And is this all the mighty feat that atheism has performed, after its big boastings, merely to change the gender, from the more worthy to the less, and instead of a god, to give us a goddess; for the eternal Father, to present us with a universal mother? Is there one so silly as to need to be told, that all applications of the ideas of gender to deity, are but the necessary consequences of the insufficiency of human language, to express things infinite and divine? They are but an approximation to an adequate expression of the truth.

And who is this nature? Let those who reject God, because they cannot see him, or, as they say, "conceive of him;" tell us when they saw their

goddess. What is she like? How tall, or short? How fat, or thin? What is her colour? What her shape? What, in sober seriousness, do you mean by nature? Can any man fairly make more of it than to say that it is the aggregate mass of all the beings which Christians call creatures, with all their properties? If you say, "nature made all these," then nature made herself. There is sublime nonsense! This is your substitute for deity!

From all that we know of nature, we must conclude that it is limited; for it is made up of parts, each of which is limited, and the whole being, made up of its parts, partakes of their character. Can you make an infinite whole of finite parts? Nothing limited, however, can be eternal. For that which is eternal is necessary, neither requiring nor admitting a prior cause, which is precluded by the idea of eternity. Only that which is in its own nature necessary existence, can be eternal; for every thing else, requiring a cause to bring it into existence, must be subsequent to its cause. Now, whatever is necessary, must be infinite. For if you suppose it finite, you conceive that it exists to a certain degree only; and conceive that a degree *more* of that being does not exist. Then, if that degree of this kind of being does not exist, non-existence is not impossible to that kind of being, therefore that kind of being is not necessary, or in other words, that is not necessary being. The same truth may be proved by another process. If one degree of that particular kind of being might not exist, another might not, and another, and another, till the whole might not, and thus the being is proved not to be necessary. Eternal being, therefore, is proved to be necessary, and necessary being is infinite. Nature we have seen to be limited, and therefore not eternal, and so not necessary. Nature, then, requires a cause or creator, which is God.

But you exclaim, "I cannot understand this."

Very likely you cannot. Then why do you pretend to grapple with a thing that is too mighty for you? Why set yourselves to dispute with such men as Newton, and Clarke, and Leibnitz, and Locke, and Paley, the giant minds of our species, and then, when confounded with their demonstration, complain you cannot understand them? If you are so shallow that you can go no farther than the surface of things, you cannot expect that we should pity, without blaming you, when we see you floundering in this abyss, and hear you crying out, "O, I am out of my depth; I shall be drowned." I have not unnecessarily mystified the subject; but have used the plainest words in the plainest way the argument would admit.

When driven from their goddess, nature, whither will atheists fly? Some betake themselves to necessity. Necessity! Why this is but a property of a being, of one kind; just as contingency is of another kind of being. Worship necessity! You might as well own gravity, or density, for a deity. Necessity the cause of all things! Why not make quantity, or size, or colour, the universal creator? Do they know the meaning of the words they use? I trow not. I suspect that atheists employ the word necessity, for this very reason, because they do not understand it. It is a convenient way of throwing dust in the eyes of the simple. After declaiming against God, as a mystery, and declaring they will believe nothing which they cannot see, they tell us that all things come from necessity.

But may not a plain hearer say, "Who is this Mr Necessity, of whom you spoke?" You reply indignantly, "I did not mean a man." Well, says the simple inquirer, so I should have thought; but as you deny a God, and then talk so much of this necessity, I supposed it must be some great man that I never before heard of. But, whether God or man, excuse me, if I ask, whether you ever saw him?

Did you ever hear him speak? Do you know what he is like? Did you ever receive a message from him? How may I know him when I see him? You are affronted at these questions. I know why. You feel the ridicule. You that will believe nothing but what you can see, and will own no God that is invisible, can believe necessity that you never saw, never heard, never touched, never received a message from, and can no more conceive what it is, than you can conceive of deity.

But you that say, necessity made every thing, should allow us to ask whether you ever saw it make any thing? Did you ever see a book composed by that author, or even printed by necessity? Do you wear a watch with that maker's name on it? What! All dumb! Is every thing else that you know, evidently made by a different sort of workman? Would you not trust necessity to make your shoes, or even to mend them, to bake your bread, or stir your fire, but will have all these things done by life and intelligence and design; and there is only this one poor little universe that you leave to be made by necessity! So that necessity, that is not fit to be a cobbler, is worthy to be a creator! O sublime science of atheism! Mighty revolutioniser! to humble what is high, and exalt that which is low; setting intelligence to trim that lamp, and leaving blind necessity to light up yonder sun, and spangle the heaven with stars!

But I have not done with necessity yet. Though its friends wish, perhaps, that I had. I have so tortured it to extract foolish confessions from it, that they may think it is high time I should now let it escape. But it has so long tormented men of honesty and sense with its nonsense and impiety, that it is fit it should be tormented in its turn. So we shall go at it again.

For what purpose, then, is this hard necessity called in? Is it not to escape a God? And why

wish to escape a God? Because he is a holy governor and a righteous judge. Fear, said an atheist, first made gods. But fear, I fear, first made atheists. No man is against God, till he suspects God is against him. Afraid that, if there is a God, he must punish them, the wicked think to be beforehand, and put him out of the way.

But how know they that their favourite necessity would be more favourable to them than deity would be? By what process of reasoning have they arrived at the conclusion, that the necessity which they say made them, will not punish them? If necessity could make such creatures as atheists, I see not why necessity should not punish them. If necessity is ingenious enough to make a man, why should she not be righteous enough to judge him? Necessity, by your own hypothesis, has done so much, that you may well suspect it can, and will do more. Necessity, if we may believe you, has placed a conscience in your breast, and followed your transgressions with many just visitations, and created many troublesome forebodings of the consequences of sin; so that it is often found to be bitterness to the believer in necessity, as well as to him that owns a deity. Why should not that which has done so much here, do something more of the same kind hereafter?

But these lovers of necessity set their deity at defiance to punish them. Why? Because they think they shall be dead. But if they first lived by necessity, and afterwards died by the same power; how know they that they shall not rise again, by necessity? The necessity that could make such creatures as we see, and afterwards crumble them to dust, could as well restore that dust to live again. I defy any man to give a satisfactory reason why that power, cause, or being, call it what you please, invest it with what properties you like, which formed man, at first, enduing him with an intellectual and



moral nature, may not re-form him after death, restore him to all his previous memory and consciousness and moral sense, and punish him for all his former sins. The consciousness and memory of a former, are known to be the scourge of a latter period of this life; and why may not the consciousness and memory of a prior life, equally prove the torment of a future? There would be nothing more wonderful in this, than there is in what atheists already ascribe to necessity. Thus they may see that the very end for which they fled into the dark cold bosom of necessity, is lost; and they are no better off, either here or hereafter, under the reign of necessity, than under the just government of God. Now, atheist, answer this, if you can.

But we have been hunting these black flitting shadows, long enough. We have been endeavouring to find out, to call forth to view, and to expose to contempt and abhorrence, atheism, under all its forms; if we can talk of forms in that which of form has none, but is, "*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.*" Let the atheist tell us what he is; why he is what he is; and wherein he supposes he is better than the believers in God. Let the pious take care to demand this of the atheist. Let them ferret him out of his lurking holes, and compel him to shew himself openly; and the triumph of the truth, with the confutation, if not the conviction and conversion of the atheist, is sure. Of his recovery and salvation, if we cannot entertain any very sanguine hopes, we should not absolutely despair. In the infatuation of his atheism, he is in danger of blaspheming his Maker, of sealing himself to perdition, and provoking the righteous one to set up the unhappy creature a flaming monument of awful judgment. But who knows the extent of the mercy of a God? It has vanquished and saved an atheist. It may again.

III. Deists form another class of infidels.

This was, formerly, almost the only form that infidelity assumed. Men professed to believe a God, the author of all things ; to own his moral attributes, and therefore to admit a moral government, with a future life, and the probable, or possible, existence of future, and even eternal rewards, if not punishments also. They denied nothing but the truth of the revelation which God has made of himself to man. This more sane species of infidelity is now, however, becoming rare. Infidels have found that, by admitting so much, they were compelled to believe more. The most acute and determined among them have abandoned real deism, as untenable, and are passing over to the atheists' camp.

Those who profess to be deists, when closely questioned, will often be found to be hypocritical atheists. One of these came to me, boasting, "I have driven atheists off the field, and I am what you profess to be ready to meet, a pure deist." But on being pressed to declare in what sense he admitted a God, his creed was found to be a species of Pantheism : all things were God, or this man was a worshipper of nature.

Another, who calls himself a believer in God, is very shy even of this confession ; but, when driven hard, he will claim the privileges of a deist. Yet, what is his God ? If any meaning can be attached to his rhapsodies, he owns the sun for a God, or perhaps, like the ancient idolaters, he deifies all the heavenly hosts. If he were removed beyond the bounds of this solar system, he would have another God, with another sun ; and another Pantheon, with other planets and constellations.

The insincerity of the modern professors of deism is proclaimed aloud, to their shame, and to the conviction of every honest and discerning man, by their making common cause with atheists. A sincere, conscientious deist, if I may be allowed to speak of

such a thing, would no more enter into an alliance with the atheists than a Christian would. There is something so vast, so overwhelming, so influential, in the true idea of deity, that, when it has once taken possession of the mind, and obtained the cordial belief of the heart, it attaches the man to the God ; so that they are, as it were, identified, and ever after make common cause.

Such a man would start with horror at the bare idea of an atheist. With more than the revulsion which the sight of a parricide creates, an honest deist would flee from the embrace of him who, as far as he can, has become a deicide. I could sooner make a friend of the man who killed my father, than of him who boasts that he has annihilated my God. When the atheist stretches out his right hand and asks alliance, the real deist, who has any spark of honour in his soul, must say, "No, there is an infinite distance between us. I could sooner give my right hand to a believer in revelation; for I am infinitely nearer to him than to you. That being whom I own and revere, you would blot out of existence; while the believer in revelation would fain strengthen the belief of a God by further evidence than I can admit. I would rather that men should believe the deity has made a revelation to us, than that they should deny there is any God at all. He that should believe in a forged letter from my father, would not treat me so cruelly as he that should falsely persuade me that my father is dead."

But what are the modern deists doing? They are "making a covenant with death, and with hell are they in agreement." An alliance, which, if they were sincere, would be monstrous and unnatural, the professed deists are, without a blush, proclaiming with atheists. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." For no man can distinguish, when

he beholds their camp, the deist from the atheist. If deism ever had any comparative glory, it may now write "Icabod" on the walls of its temples: "the glory is departed." Atheists see this, and triumph over their allies; so that the leader of the former band says of the Coryphæus of Deism, "he is as much an atheist as I am."

Let the man that still retains any lurking belief in God, know that this is recorded in heaven, and will be remembered against him, when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts: "You professed to believe in my existence," may the judge say, "and aided others to blot it out of remembrance. You have added hypocrisy to impiety, and aggravated infidelity by insult. Atheists said, 'there is no God;' and you said, 'there is one, but he is a trifle.' They shrunk from me, as too great or too good for them; you pretended to embrace me, only that you might betray me with a kiss, saying, 'yes, there is a God, but what signifies that?'"

Oh! if we could find a real deist that was intelligent, frank, honest, decided, and cared for consistency and truth! How we should like to question him! What kind of God do you admit? What is his nature? What are his attributes? What is his character? How do you know him? Tell us your sources of knowledge. Separate them from all the aids of revelation, from all the information you derived through the help of those who derived help from the Bible. How firm is your grasp of this vital truth? Have you satisfaction? Or are you but seeking it? Are you sure? Or do you only guess? If you do not know your God; how can you judge of that which professes to come from him? If you are yet uncertain of the primary truth, a God, how can you be certain concerning the second and consequential, the revelation from him?

Do you believe in a moral government? Has your God formed you to be ruled by a moral law,

addressed to your understanding, heart, and conscience? Has he conferred immortality upon you? Or will you perish with the beasts? If you survive the bed of death, will you be judged according to your present character and conduct? Will there be rewards for virtue and punishments for vice? What will be the nature, what the duration of this retribution? Will it be eternal? How do you know all these things? Whence did you derive your information? Are you not taking a leaf out of a book which you profess not to believe? Are you sure of your own principles? Can you feel your ground firm? Are your convictions sufficient to subdue your passions and to sway your life?

Have you an adequate rule of conduct? Do you know your duty in each circumstance and relation of life? Have you any law of marriage? Or are you utterly without a rule for the intercourse of the sexes? Wherein consists the nature or sanction of chastity? What is your practice as to the eating of meat; and what is your authority for killing, or even using, the inferior animals? Who gave you your law? Whence did you learn it? How can you prove it? Are you sure that you are not stealing our statutes, while you deny the authority of our code? Did you come honestly by your creed? Or is even your morality a theft?

If you are uncertain on all these points, and ignorant to a great degree of the character and mind of the God you own, are you a competent judge of revelation? You say a certain letter did not come from a certain person; but when asked why? you own that you know neither the man, nor his mind, nor his style, nor his hand. How can you reproach with credulity those who say, "we do know him, and his character and mind, and are sure that this letter came from him"?

If you profess to know the character and moral government of God, you must own you have

sinned against him. Will he, then, forgive sin? Or will he always punish it? How can you determine? If you say, he will forgive, pray tell me how you know it? What are your proofs? Point out the page of nature that contains the doctrine of pardon. We should like to read it along with you; for we are glad of all information on this subject, which deeply concerns us. By what means may we obtain that blessing? At what time? Is it now, or at some future period? Can it be known and enjoyed in this life? How often will God forgive? What sorts of sins? Some? or all? Many? or few only? Are you quite sure that no part of your doctrine is tainted by being stolen—stolen—from—you know where?

Does your light of nature discover a fountain of purity, as well as of pardon? Does it prescribe for your moral diseases? What aids does it afford to restore virtue when lost? What specimens can it give of success? Where are its converts from vice to virtue? Where its new hearts? What security does it afford against temptation? What promise of triumph? What elevation of hope? What prospect of reward?

What solace have you in death? What assurance of life beyond the grave? What antidote to dissolution? But I will spare you; for I know your embarrassment and confusion. Christians are pretty well aware what nature can do. Its secrets and resources are as open to us as to you. We know well that, on many, nay most of these questions, we might merge the last class of infidels with the first; for deists are, to a great extent, mere sceptics. Utter uncertainty on all that we most need to know, attends those who reject the Bible.

One deist says, there is a God that created us, but he cares not for us, and has left us to ourselves, to do as we like; while another says, it is manifest that he cares enough about us to support

us, without which we could not exist, and therefore we must conclude that he governs us, and will call us to account. This one believes a God, but no future life; but *that* professes to believe both. Here is one who denies the difference between good and evil, virtue and vice; and there another who maintains that there is an essential and eternal distinction. One derides marriage, and says, adultery, when discovered, is a trifle, and when undiscovered, nothing. A high toned deist condemns suicide as cowardice, and rebellion against our commander, who placed us at our post, which we should not desert, till he calls us away; but the crowd of infidels maintain, that we have a right to the delicious privilege of murdering ourselves whenever we please.

And is this the light for whose sake we are commanded to put out that of revelation? Can the fair reflecting deist believe that the Deity has given us no further information? Can he conclude that a wise benevolent Being formed man, the lord and ruler and glory of this world, and flung him on the ground in a fit of sullen reserve, and went away and left him, without deigning to speak a word to him, to tell him who made him and for what, and whither he would remove him, after his abode on earth should terminate? Is such a supposition more honourable to Deity than that account which revelation gives; that he who made our first parent shewed himself to the newly formed creature, told him, who was his father, why he had formed him, what was the duty of the creature, what was his destination, and his danger? If your God is that dumb or sullen father that never spoke to his child; ours behaved like one, who could love and speak to the offspring of his creative power. But if our first parent needed that communication, which it would seem almost cruel to deny, have *we* no need to know what was said to the father of our family?



Is not all the information he may have received, as important to us as to him? Are not the uncertainties of the sceptic, and even of the deist, proofs sufficient, that what needed to be told at first, needs to be repeated to the last? But where shall we find it, except in the Bible? Is there any other authentic document to which the deist can refer us? During the longevity of the first ages, of which all history gives hints, tradition might suffice to convey the information; but, when human life was reduced to its present standard, in the days of Moses, it became necessary to record these great truths, in a volume, such as that of which he was the first writer.

Every candid deist must own that we need some revelation from God, and must wish the Bible true. Who would not long for all possible information from a being so important as God, and on subjects so interesting to us as the soul, duty, sin, pardon, death, judgment, and eternity? If it were possible for any one to reject the Bible, after candid examination, it must be with a sigh from the centre of the soul, and with an expression of bitter disappointment. "Alas! I had hoped to learn here something more of my Maker and my destiny than I could discover elsewhere; but my most eager expectations are frustrated, and I am flung back to grope in the dark as before." Instead of this, what mad exultation is betrayed by those who seem to think they have found a prize, when they have only put out a light and lost their way!

And they labour to make converts too! Converts to what? What do they offer us, instead of the Bible? The light of nature. What, then! does the Bible put out the light of nature? The deist points to the heavens and earth, and says, "Behold our Bible." But the Christian points to the same creation, and says, "Behold my book;" and then pointing to another quarter, says, "Behold my Bible

too. You bid me burn my Bible, that I may study nature. I invite you to read my Bible, that you may study nature better. You have but an odd volume from a great author; I present to you a second, that never contradicts the first, but completes the work, and tells you so much which the first cannot, that you will by *this* read *that* in clearer light. You bid me burn my second, because you have only the first. Nay, you had better borrow my second. Think you that the Bible forbids the study of the book of nature? It not only forbids not, it encourages, and commands, and enables. Hark! it says, "See that thou magnify his work which men behold. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. When I behold thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Bless the Lord all his works, in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul." "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Rom. i. 20, 21.

The book of nature is illuminated to the student of revelation. What charms are thrown on every page of creation by the volume of revelation! The blue sky assumes a lovelier hue to him that has learned who it is that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them abroad as a tent to dwell in. I had never seen half the splendour I now behold in the sun, if I had not read of him who is "the sun of righteousness, that rises on the soul with healing in his wings." The clouds assume

new forms of grandeur and new tints of beauty; the winds roar music, and the lightnings flash with glory; since I have read of him that maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh on the wings of the wind; who maketh the storms his messengers, and the flaming fire his ministers. I love to stand by the foaming surge of ocean, because it reminds me of him that holdeth its waters in the hollow of his hand, and says to my soul, "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" Jer. v. 22. At my Saviour's bidding, I behold the lilies of the field how they grow, Matt. vi. 28—30. Who but a lover of nature could have paraphrased the book of grace as Watts has done? Who ever studied the volume of creation so extensively, so profoundly as Newton? Far into her most distant fields of grandeur and of glory he glanced. But he pronounced atheism as unphilosophical as it is impious. Who led the way to the modern discoveries in chemistry? Boyle, who made the Bible his study and delight. Who has disclosed the wonders of creation with so much success as Ray, and Derham, and Nieuwentyt?

Where will they who bid us forsake the Bible, that we may study nature, find such students of nature as among Christians? These are the men that rise from nature up to nature's God. All that creation can teach they are glad to learn; all that she cannot teach they are still more glad to learn elsewhere. They know, better than deists, what nature can reveal, and what she cannot. Much that is ascribed to her, we are sure, is beyond her power to tell; and much more we know is abhorrent from her. She is asked questions which she cannot answer, and made to give responses which

she never uttered. The real knowledge of the idolaters of nature is borrowed from the Bible ; but they know not how to use it when they have stolen it, and mixing it up with notions that they never learned either from nature or Scripture, the light turns into smoke, which disorders the eye that should have been enlightened.

And now, when you ask us to forsake the Bible and follow you, we ask you who you are ? “ Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye ? ”

Are you sceptics ? Of what species ? And shall we forsake a certainty for an uncertainty ? What ! invite us to think with you, when you know not what to think ! Recommend to us your system, when you do not even pretend to have one ; and when your state is torment, if you are sincere ; and if you are at your ease, you must be hypocrites ; not sceptical, because you cannot find truth, but because you care not enough about all that is interesting, all that is infinite, all that is eternal, to take the pains to seek truth.

Are you atheists ? And do *you* ask us to forsake our God for your nothing ? Exchange infinite riches for boundless poverty ! And with whom do you expect to succeed ? With him who loves the God in whom he believes, who obeys the authority that he recognizes, and who hopes to enjoy to eternity the Being from whom he expects immortal life ? If you look for a convert in such a one, either you must be mad, or you must think him so.

No : your converts must be from another class. You must hope to bewilder the head of him who is already an atheist at heart. The man who has refused his reverence to one whom he professes to believe infinitely venerable ; who has no love for the first fair, the first good ; who is a rebel to the throne of him whom he owns to be by right and by merit sovereign of the universe ; the man who therefore trembles at the power which he cannot deny,

and despairs of the love which he cannot return, may catch at atheism as a boon. It is the paradise of fools; the asylum of criminals, who fly from justice, and refuse to sue for mercy; the forlorn hope of the desperate, who, lost to all prospect of being either holy or blessed, say, "Then let me be nothing!"

With all others, the Deity is not merely a mathematical demonstration, but a lovely conception; to the intellect, truth; and to the heart, beauty. To reject God would be at once to abandon the first truth, and so lose our hold of every other; and to reject the chief good, which gives loveliness and bliss to all inferior beings. And for this one being that includes all the elements of grandeur, virtue, loveliness, and bliss, you proffer to me—what?—Nothing. And you expect us to give up every thing for nothing? Verily, you pay a fine compliment, either to our understanding or your own.

An atheist! Of what sort? One that believes the world eternal? Or one who supposes it came into existence by chance? Or a worshipper of nature, believing that nature made herself? Or a believer in necessity, a property of being, as if it were itself a being? As if you should deny your own father, but own yourself the child of his height!

Define your atheism; prove it; lay it clearly before us, with all its evidences; and let us see if they are more numerous and satisfactory than our proofs of a God, before you ask us to turn atheists.

Are you deists? Of what class? Define your deism. Shew us what you have learned by the light of nature, and prove to us that it is not taken without acknowledgement from Scripture. Produce your reasons for your creed, and convince us that these are more numerous and more convincing than those which the Bible can produce.

Then demonstrate to us that your system makes you holier, happier, and more useful than ours ever made its sincere disciples.

Shew your own sincerity. Prove that you really believe a God, as you profess to do ; that you have no fellowship with atheists, who deny him ; no sympathy with sceptics, who throw every thing into suspicion ; no alliance with impious mockers, and blasphemers, and profligates.

Christians, see the ground which you should choose, the demands you have a right to make. To those who bid you quit your house and set it on fire, you should in all reason say, "will you provide me with a better?" If they say, "No ; you must come and wander with us in the open fields;" you may justly reply, "none but an enemy to me would make me such a proposal."

If you are Christians indeed, you will be fortified by such an evidence of the truth and goodness of your cause as I have not yet mentioned—the renovation of your hearts, the pacification of your consciences, and a delightful sanctifying communion with God. This, no form of infidelity can produce. The humble believer, looking forward to a state of consummate holiness and bliss, says, "he that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also has given us the earnest of the Spirit." This is a demonstration of the being of God and of the truth of his revelation, which no sophistry can tear from the breast. But, while you cherish this, which is to *you* most satisfactory ; labour to furnish yourselves with such arguments as may instruct and convince gain-sayers.

Employ your earnest prayers at the eternal throne, in behalf of those who deny the God that made them by his power, and abjure the Lord that bought them with his blood. Shew that your superior happiness cherishes benevolence, inspires compassion, and prompts to incessant intercession for those who, not knowing their own mercies, court their own doom. In times like these, cease not to cry, "Arise, O God, and plead thine own cause."





# THE DISCUSSION

WHICH FOLLOWED

## THE FOURTH LECTURE.

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THE last evening it must be recollected ended in disturbance and disappointment. I regretted this, but I felt compelled to bow to an overruling dispensation. My first declaration at the opening of these Lectures was, that any person wishing to question the Lecturer, would be permitted. It was allowed the first time, and continued a second; a third time it was attempted, but failed. I then regretted it, because some persons might have wished to put questions on that lecture: and now, if any person is wishing to question me upon it, I am ready to answer. As it is now printed, perhaps there is a greater advantage to a querist than before, as he may have it in his hand to refer to at pleasure. And let me now say, that, having given this opportunity, I am not dissatisfied with the attempt made, though it failed in the last instance; I consider, on the whole, I did right in making this effort, and I am happy to find, that good has resulted from it, and I pray that God of his infinite mercy will crown it with his blessing. The chair will now be taken.

Mr. Price having taken the chair, after a few minutes' pause, observed that the Lecturer would wait five minutes longer, in order that any gentleman, wishing to put a question, might have the opportunity. If none presented himself during that space, it would be concluded that none wished to put a question.

The time having expired, the chairman announced

it, and the Rev. G. B. Kidd, (of Macclesfield) was about to conclude with prayer, when a person in the area of the chapel expressed his wish to put a question.

The question was—"Whether a man, being a good man, but not believing in Christ, but that there is a hereafter, would, according to the Scriptures, be damned for not believing in Christ, though a good man?"

Dr. Bennett.—I think I might appeal to the chair and to the meeting whether I am under any obligation at all to answer this question. In the first place, the chairman announced that five minutes would be allowed; we waited, and the five minutes expired, and the minister in the pulpit was about to conclude with prayer. Then, when the allotted time had expired, one comes forward with a question. As however it might be timidity which prevented him from doing it before; I shall not avail myself of this. In the second place, this question neither applies to the last, nor to this lecture; it neither questions my assertions concerning "Religion no Priestcraft," nor does it avow the faith of the Sceptic, or the Atheist, or the Deist; it does not meet the subject of this night's lecture: so that on no ground whatever am I under any obligation to answer this question: but I shall not avail myself of this. It will be seen, however, how necessary it is to have some limit, or boundary, within which we intend to allow ourselves to be questioned; because, if a person be permitted to interrogate you on any thing and every thing, he may question you on the square of the circle, or the discovery of the longitude; there would be no end to the variety of queries, if the questioner were not limited to the lecture: but I say again, I shall not avail myself of this. I am not trying to get out of a difficulty, but to shew the propriety of limiting ourselves to one subject. It must be manifest to every fair reasoner, that if this

were not the case, a man might, before he came here, get up a knotty question, view it on all sides, and be prepared to fight a hard battle, and all on a subject of which the Lecturer never entertained one thought, the question being far remote from the subject. I now appeal to the judgment and conscience of all, whether there is not reason in what I have said; yet I shall not avail myself of this neither. It is the question of an immortal creature, of a fellow creature, a child of our common parent, whom I must meet at the tribunal of God, the judge, at the last day. The question of one whom I am bound to value as the work of my Maker's hands, and a partaker of that nature which my Redeemer took on him for my salvation. It is my duty to seek the salvation of a fellow creature. This is the highest honour of a man, and especially of a minister; and I should despise myself, if I availed myself of any right, however clearly established, to refuse an answer to the question. But will the questioner allow me to say, with all candour and good feeling, that I consider the question in itself to be a contradiction. I would not assert this roundly, if I were not prepared to prove it; to prove it on my own principles, because every man argues on his own principles, and not on the principles of others. I consider, then, this question, like all that are founded on a false position, as a contradiction; for, being founded on falsehood, it necessarily involves contradiction. Here then, it is asked, if a man being a good man, and believing not in Christ, but that there is a hereafter, will, according to the Scriptures, be damned for not believing in Christ? Now, I might say I am referred here to the Scriptures, and I am asked for the doctrine of the Scriptures, and not for my personal opinion.

Here the questioner said, the question in fewer words was, whether a man would be judged for his faith or his works?

Dr. Bennett continued—But faith is an act. The Scriptures declare, that whenever the Gospel comes to man, it presents the knowledge of Christ to him; and if he does not believe in Christ, that very fact proves that he is not a good man: for the Scriptures declare, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;” that it is “an evil heart of unbelief” which turns away men from the Gospel of Christ; and that the radical fault lies in the heart. Therefore there can be no such thing as a good man not believing in Christ, when Christ has been presented to him. This does not, be it remembered, touch on the heathens who never heard of Christ, but supposes a man who has had Christ presented to him. The Scriptures speak of those to whom the Gospel comes, and say little of those to whom it does not go. It is not necessary, then, for me to speak of the state of those hereafter, who have not had the Scriptures; but of those who have the Scriptures, yet, receiving them not, are offended with them; to such the Scriptures address themselves. Such is my proper object to night, in answering this question, and such is the proper business of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, then, declare, that “whosoever doth not receive their testimony, concerning Christ, hath made God a liar, for not believing the record God gave of his Son.” Can there be any doubt as to whether such a man can be a good man?

The questioner.—Then I am to take it for granted, that though I am a good man, if I believe not in Christ, I shall be damned.

Dr. Bennett.—I scarcely think the gentleman could have understood my answer. I maintained that the question contained a contradiction. No man is a good man who does not receive the testimony of Christ, when brought to him; for that fact is the test of character. He shews the state of his heart, and proves that he is alienated from God. He

makes God a liar, because he does not believe the testimony God gives of his Son. Here is the "*evil heart of unbelief.*" Then comes the question in another form ; Whether we shall be judged for our faith or our works ? I have already said, that, upon the principles of the Scriptures, a man is not a good man who does not believe in Christ. Now it must be admitted, that there are some things, though mere matters of faith, which are, nevertheless, tests of character. Suppose a man were to say, Here am I and my wife ; we have lived together forty or fifty years, and have borne the trials of life together ; but I believe I have a right to cut her throat to-morrow. Would any man say that this, though a mere matter of faith, did not affect his moral character ? Could a man be supposed to be a good man who believed it lawful to cut his wife's throat ?

Questioner.—I thought we should be judged by our actions ; and that, if I do unto all men as I would they should do to me, I shall be saved. If I am to be damned for not believing in Christ, I shall be damned, for I shall remain an unbeliever to the day of my death.

Dr. Bennett.—I am sorry to see the tone and spirit of the questioner's observations. It must be very manifest that no man should assert this of himself. Many have said the same as positively, and afterwards as positively unsaid it, and bitterly regretted that they ever said it at all : I pray God it may be so with you. If your observation means strictly *actions*, it must be manifest that tempers and words are excluded. Suppose a man were to say, I was never in my life guilty of a wrong action towards my wife and children ; at the same time it was manifest that he hated them ; all his fault was in his temper. Though no action of his life could be fastened upon, yet he would be guilty, for we are accountable for our tempers. With regard to words : if a man tell a lie, is it not manifest

that he is accountable to the Divine tribunal ? Then if it be said, I did not mean to restrict the observation to overt actions: I meant all that may be called actions of the mind. Then, rejecting the testimony of Christ is an action of the mind, and thus you are amenable to the Divine tribunal. In civil society, if a man make another a liar, and tell him to his face, I don't believe you, I would not believe you on your word, though you should give it to me in writing; that would be regarded as a great offence, and might lead to what is called an affair of honour, which I should call an affair of murder, but what is commonly called a duel. Now if men resent this offence so severely; when God sends his Gospel to a man and that man declares he won't believe it, and will not believe it as long as he lives, I ask whether that man is not guilty before the Divine tribunal, and whether he does not reject this testimony, at the peril of his own soul ? May the Lord God deliver you from this doom. I have tasted the wormwood and the gall; I have been in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, not believing in the Son of God; but I say of those days, "Let them be darkness; let not God regard them from above; let not the light shine upon them!" "But I did it ignorantly and in unbelief; howbeit for this cause obtained I mercy, that in me Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." The Lord God grant that you may obtain like mercy, and like Paul preach the faith which once you despised. Amen.

# A SUMMARY

## OF THE

### EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

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2 PETER i. 16.

*We have not followed cunningly devised fables.*

ROMANS i. 20.

*So that they are without excuse.*

THE external evidences of divine revelation are designed to rouse attention to the sacred volume, and to warn us that our Maker is speaking to us here. They are like an inscription in letters of gold, on the back of the Bible, "this is the book of God;" that they who know it not may be induced to open and to read it, and that they who were in danger of trampling on it, may be warned first to look within, and see whether its contents do not accord with the inscription.

The internal evidences are such as present themselves to the judgment and conscience, on the perusal of the volume; and are like the finger of God visibly writing in letters of light on these pages, as it once did on the walls of Belshazzar's palace. I have, therefore, given a double course of lectures; that the external evidences may assist to rouse attention to the internal.

At the close of the course, it is needful to take a review of the whole field, and of the contest which we have lately maintained. The external proofs of divinity which revelation can produce, may be



classed under the heads of miracles, existing facts, past history, and fulfilled prophecy.

I. The evidence arising from miracles.

The slightest attention to the general temper of mankind with regard to God and eternity, will convince every reasonable man, that, even if our Creator really had commissioned any one of our race, to speak to the rest, and give us the most important information, which we could not otherwise obtain, it would be in vain for the messenger merely to say, "God has sent me to speak to you." Such is the general indifference to spiritual and eternal things, that the great mass of mankind would be like the "deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely." To rouse the attention of the careless, therefore, as well as to challenge the faith of the incredulous, it is necessary to give some striking signs and proofs, when God sends us an extraordinary message by the lips of man.

Deep in the centre of the human mind is seated the conviction, that, with omniscience dwells omnipotence, or that the All-wise is also the Almighty. When, therefore, we are called to listen to divine instructions and commands, nothing is more proper than to shew that he who addresses us has supreme power over us, and that it is at the peril of our safety we refuse to hearken. To this conviction the miracles of Scripture appeal. The infidels, finding themselves unable to meet the evidence which attends the miracles which confirm revelation, affect to treat the whole thing as incredible: how different would have been their tone, if revelation had produced no miraculous signs of its divine origin! Then, unbelievers would have made miracles to be every thing: now, they attempt to make them out to be nothing.

We have, however, a right to examine whether those works to which the Scriptures appeal are real

miracles, the effects of divine power ; in order to be well assured that we are not imposed upon by deceptive appearances. This may be proved, to the conviction of every honest inquirer after truth. The works to which revelation appeals are well known to be such as no mere man has power to perform. This is unquestionable in the case of raising the dead. The works were wrought in the face of day, before all sorts of witnesses, foes as well as friends. They have been subjected to the severest scrutiny ; all the powers of the world being armed against the messengers of heaven. If we have not seen the miracles ourselves, sufficient evidence has come down to us to claim our deliberate and rational belief.

That the miracles which prove the Scriptures to be divine bore these characters of veracity, I have shewn in the first lecture. To put this in the strongest light, I have considered what must be the hypothesis of unbelievers. One of two things they must be supposed to say. They may affirm that the miracles were mere juggling tricks, performed by men who, not being commissioned from heaven, had no more power to work real miracles than we have ; but being adroit, contrived to deceive the senses of spectators, and to make them believe that miracles were wrought. This hypothesis I met by challenging infidels to do the same. In former ages, men might ascribe every thing for which they could not account, to magic, as the Jews still ascribe the miracles of Jesus to the magic power of the *Shem Hamphorash*, the name *Jehovah*. But of this wretched subterfuge, infidels would not avail themselves. They, therefore, must own that, if the prophets and apostles were not armed with divine powers, any other man may do what the apostles really did. Then let infidels do the same. If they were sincere, they would accept the challenge. They would reply, “ well, we will shew you, that we

can do whatever your prophets and apostles really did, that is, deceive the senses of men." For, according to the infidel's hypothesis, they are well able. If Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, were what the infidels would make us believe, those ancient personages had no higher powers than modern infidels possess; and therefore *these* can now do all that *those* ever really did. But what has been the result of the challenge? It was delivered in no soft tone, couched in no measured terms. For I wished to sting them to a reply. But though they came, and saw me fling down the glove, not one of them ventured to pick it up. None of their heroes had courage enough to look the argument in the face. No voice was heard to say, "that is as fair as it is bold, and here we will meet you; and shew that we can do all that prophets and apostles ever really did."

But infidels may adopt another, and only one more, hypothesis.—They may say, the prophets and apostles did not even deceive men, at the time, with any pretence to miracles; but the whole story was invented after these works were said to have been performed. Here again, I might meet them with a challenge to do the same. Let infidels, without even pretending to work miracles, so as to deceive the senses of men, spread a report that they have done wonders, raised the dead, fed thousands, cured all sorts of diseases, and controlled the elements of nature on a grand scale. Let them procure credit to such a report, and induce men by hundreds to suffer the loss of all things, and even of life itself, for their faith in this false report. Let them create a glorious army of martyrs to this faith. Still they are dumb, no voice says, "we will." No preparations are made to rival apostles in their own line.

To these plain matters of fact, then, what do infidels oppose? Nothing but abstract theory. Certain speculations on the nature of miracles are set

up against the evidence of our senses, and of all history. If Christians had acted thus, what clamorous exclamations, what bursts of laughter should we have heard from infidels! They would have told us, we might as well attempt to batter down the fortress, or the rock of Gibraltar, with feathers or with snow-balls, as to overturn facts by abstract propositions. Let not infidels, after this, taunt Christians with deceiving men out of their senses by fair speeches.

Still it may be said, if these theories which infidels advance against miracles are false, they can be shewn to be false. We answer, "not always, and by every man." Plain honest men, of sound sense, who can tell when they see a brother raised from the dead, are not always logicians, to be able to detect mere sophisms, and to shew the falsehood of the major or minor of a syllogism, or to pronounce a non sequitur on the conclusion. Religion was intended, not merely for logicians, but for all; for the simple and unlearned, as well as for the metaphysical and acute. The greater part of infidels shew too clearly, that *they* are not able to detect the falsehood of an argument; for they do not even understand the abstract propositions by which the better educated among them succeed in deceiving the rest.

But I hear them retort, "surely among Christians *some* may be found to detect the fallacies of infidels, and to shew that, when they attempt to overturn facts by arguments, the arguments themselves are false. For what are Christian ministers supported; and of what use is their boasted learning, if they cannot detect the falsehoods of infidels?" There is much justice in this reply; and if Christians cannot refute infidels, we have reason to be ashamed either of their cause or of its advocates. It is for this reason, that, abjuring all interference of force and human laws, we employ such Lectures as these, to

prove the truth of our religion, and expose the errors of its adversaries.

I have, therefore, met Hume's boasted argument, that miracles are an attempt to set up testimony against experience. "All our experience," says he, "teaches us that the laws of nature are not altered; but I am called to believe, upon human testimony, that they have been, in the case of miracles." Another turn is given to this, when it is said, that it is more probable that men should lie, than that miracles should be true. Though I have already answered this, in a summary way, it may perhaps be desirable to give it fuller confutation. If this is to be made a question of probabilities, the whole antecedent probability of a revelation from God should be taken into the account. This, in a complete treatise on the evidences of revelation, would occupy a large space; for the most abundant proofs might be given that a revelation is probable. At this I have glanced in my fourth Lecture, when shewing the utter improbability, that a wise and benevolent Creator would leave us in the state of gloomy darkness and distracting uncertainty in which infidels are found. As then, it is probable that God would reveal himself, so it may be proved that miracles are an appropriate and even a necessary proof of that revelation. Here then are two probabilities attendant on miracles; that which arises from the reasonableness of a revelation, and that which follows from the necessity of miracles to confirm it. Now for the other side of the question, the probability that the witnesses to the Scripture miracles should tell a lie. Hume says, this is more probable than that miracles should be true. But the cunning sophist chose to put the case, as if it were that of a single man telling a common lie. Now, even this is not antecedently probable, but improbable, just in proportion as there are more truths told in the world than lies. What a state would the world be in, if

it were more probable that every word uttered by every man were false, than that it is true! That truth is the rule, and lying the exception, is proved by the constant tendency we have to give men credit, and by the change which takes place in our ordinary feelings whenever we detect a man in a lie. Here, then, is another probability in favour of the testimony to miracles.

But the testimony of prophets and apostles, and of Jesus Christ, is no ordinary assertion; and the lie, if there were any, would be no common one. It would be such a lie as was never told in the world before, and, therefore, here again is a strong probability in behalf of its truth. Take the case of the resurrection of Christ. Here is not merely a single witness, but there are many; at least the twelve apostles, though you may also reckon the five hundred who saw Jesus in Galilee, after he had risen from the dead. These witnesses declare that they were convinced of the fact, "by many infallible proofs, for Jesus was seen of them forty days, eating and drinking with them, and conversing with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The witnesses told this tale, at the very time, and on the very spot, just when and where the truth could be proved, or the falsehood, if any, be detected. The witnesses delivered their testimony in the face of the national authorities, who had crucified Jesus, and who now quailed before them, complaining, "you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and you would bring this man's blood upon us." These witnesses devoted their lives to the propagation of their testimony. They spread the report and obtained credit to it, not only through their own country, but through all surrounding nations; not in the remote villages of barbarous countries, but in the populous cities of the most cultivated nations. The reward they received from men was labour and toil, scorn and

reproach, persecutions, stripes, imprisonment and death. But none of these things moved them. They never could be brought to contradict each other, as those who agree to tell a lie may easily be made to do. They shewed by their whole lives, that, in all other things, they were men of strict and even severe morals, and they taught, that "all liars should have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." That such men should thus persist unto death in propagating a pernicious lie, without any prospect of reward in this life, but the stake, and without any hope of reward hereafter, according to their own doctrine, but that which is due to liars, is utterly improbable; for such a thing never happened in the world, except, as infidels suppose, in this one case. So much then for the question of probability.

Now, we will look at the affair in another point of light. It is said, that the advocates for miracles set up testimony against experience. "My experience," says Hume, "teaches me that the laws of nature are never altered, but that men do sometimes tell lies; so that experience bids me reject the testimony to miracles." But I have shewn, in the first lecture, that it is not experience that teaches us the laws of nature are never altered. All that experience teaches us, is, that *we* have never seen them altered. And does the argument for miracles call us to say, that we ever *have* seen the laws of nature changed? The eye-witnesses to miracles would be called to say so; but then *their* experience would allow them to say so, and would forbid them to affirm that the laws of nature are never violated.

The very argument for miracles requires the stability of the laws of nature, that they should not frequently be interrupted; and never without grand occasion, when it is worthy of the Deity specially to interfere. With regard to ourselves, the *testimony* to miracles supposes that we have not seen these



laws altered, and that, in the instances in which we are told that they have been, God designed by them to give some adequate proofs of an extraordinary revelation of his mind to us.

That the laws of nature are *never* altered no man can tell, by his own experience. No one of us can tell by experience, that the course of nature is not at this moment changed, in some other part of the world ; and, that the usual order of things has not often been reversed, on this very spot, before we were born. How then can we know that this has not actually happened ? By the credible testimony of others, who have lived in other places, and other times. Thus it turns out, that our very knowledge of the uniform operation of the laws of nature is derived from testimony, that very testimony, which Hume would despise as of no value in behalf of miracles, but which he considers as infallible, and even calls it experience, when given in behalf of the fixed laws of nature. So much for the strength of his consistency, and for the value of his argument.

But there is still remaining one very important consideration, which Hume's sophism keeps out of sight. To those to whom divine revelation first came, it was no affair of human testimony at all. They were not called to believe what other men said, but what they themselves knew by the testimony of their senses, or, if Hume pleases, by their own experience. The whole Jewish nation believed, not upon the testimony of Moses, but by their own experience, that they had enjoyed a miraculous escape from the plagues of Egypt ; that they had passed safely through the Red Sea, on foot ; and, that they had heard the voice of God speaking to them from Mount Sinai. The thousands that were miraculously fed by Christ, all those that were healed by him, and those whom he raised from the dead, knew by their own experience, in the highest sense, that these things were true. But it is only in a very inferior and improper

sense, that Hume could say, "experience teaches me that the laws of nature are never altered." Surely, this is pretending to prove a negative. But all the spectators of Christ's miracles, and the witnesses to his resurrection, knew, by the testimony of their own senses, that these miracles were really wrought. Here, therefore, there is no opportunity for Hume's sophism to play its deceptive tricks; but his favourite experience may receive all the credit it can demand, for human testimony does not interpose at all.

As for ourselves, who receive this report on the testimony of the chosen witnesses, I shall shew that if, in this respect, we have evidence inferior to theirs, we have in other respects, additional satisfaction; so that, if we are not quite on equal grounds with them, we have still evidence enough to claim our belief, and to expose us to tremendous consequences if we reject the truth.

Having demolished one abstract argument, which infidels have attempted to set up against our facts, and shewn it to be a tissue of falsehoods and contradictions, I will now proceed to consider another, and, as I believe, the only remaining theory that is rash enough to fight with fact.

It is said that miracles represent the Deity as changeable, and as a bungling workman, who is obliged to alter his own machinery, to meet each new and unexpected occurrence. This whole argument is false; but before I proceed to prove my assertion, I will take the liberty to ask, how came these objectors to know that the Deity is not changeable? Have they stolen a leaf out of our book? This indeed informs me that "Jehovah changeth not." But simple as the truth may appear, and incontrovertible as they seem to think it, it is far more than they can know without help from the Bible. That it now commends itself to our judgment, after the discovery is made, is no proof that we could have found it out

for ourselves. What has been the doctrine of heathen poets and philosophers, but that of a mutable and even capricious God? And what, even now, do men who have never been within the sunshine of revelation, know of the immutability of deity?

But now for the assertion that miracles make the Deity to be changeable. How does this appear? Plain Christians would find it hard to discover. They would say, I believe the miracles of Scripture, but I believe too the immutability of God; and I never saw or dreamed of any inconsistency between these two articles of my creed. He that affirms there is such inconsistency ought to be prepared to shew it: let him do it if he can. He affirms that miracles are changes in the works of God, therefore they prove a changeable workman. Wonderful demonstration! Who can resist it?

But a Christian father says, God wills a change, yet does not change his will. No, surely, there is no necessity that he should. For he may always have willed this change; it may be an integral part of an eternal unalterable plan. Any workman can tell you, that he produces a thousand changes in the work on which he is employed, without change of purpose. Amidst all the diversified operations of his hands, and his tools, his original purpose is steadily pursued, and is advancing to the accomplishment which was from the first contemplated. Did you ever see an artist paint a portrait? What strange alterations he makes in it! He sketches the likeness at first, and you are struck with the instantaneous effect of his magic pencil. But you continue to gaze; and not only wonder, but are vexed to see him destroy his own work; for the likeness has vanished. But if you exclaim, what a fickle man! You sat down to produce a likeness, and then changed your mind and gave us a daub that has no resemblance; he would but smile at your ignorance and folly, assuring you that he had shewn no fickleness

at all, but was still pursuing the original purpose of his mind, which had every change in view, from the first moment he sat down before the canvass.

But the deists say, "this is another of the Christian's ingenious escapes out of a difficulty. If we give you credit for adroitness, you must not expect us to believe that this is a truth, merely because you have compelled us to admit that it *may* be so." Very well; if we have succeeded thus far, we will go farther, and compel you to own that the thing *must* be as we have shewn it *may* be. We have positive proofs that miracles are but parts of an original plan. They are so far from arguing any change in deity that they shew him unchangeable. What if we can shew that he had determined on his miraculous works, long before he wrought them? The miracles were foretold, and miracles in connexion with prophecy shew that there is no fickleness in deity.

The miraculous judgment of the flood was foretold to Noah, and proclaimed by him to men, so long before it happened, that he had time to prepare an ark, for the safety of his household. The antediluvian world, therefore, perished, not merely for its sensuality, but for its infidelity. They sinned, God warned; they disbelieved, He smote, and they perished. The miracles which rescued Israel from Egypt, the house of bondage, were foretold to Abraham, four hundred years before they were wrought. "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Gen. xv. 13, 14.

The miracles of Christ were foretold by Isaiah, six hundred years before the Saviour was born. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall

the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

Jesus Christ foretold his own resurrection, at the very commencement of his ministry. This is what no impostor would do; for this imposed upon him the necessity of either suffering as a criminal, or living as a convicted impostor, without any possibility of escape from the hard alternative. If J<sup>es</sup>us had not been put to death, he would have been convicted of falsehood; and if he were executed, what could he gain by his imposture? Besides, the fulfilment of his prediction was committed to the care of his enemies, who would rather prove him false than true. Let infidels muse over this dilemma, it may do them good. In hope of this, I will illustrate the case by an anecdote.

After the restoration of the Stuarts, it is said that the Duke of York visited Milton, who was then old, and poor, and blind. With these calamities the Duke reproached him, as if they were the judgments of God for the poet's vindication of the death of Charles. What! exclaimed Milton, is it a proof that I am a wicked man because I have lost my eyes? Then, what a wicked man must your father have been; for he lost his head! Stung with the reply, the Duke complained to his brother, Charles the Second, and wished him to put Milton to death, as a regicide. But the King, who was rather merrily, than cruelly wicked, asked, is not the man old? Yes, replied the Duke. And poor? Yes. And blind? Yes. Then, said Charles let him live, if it is only out of spite to him.

Now, when Jesus foretold his own death, and said to the Jews, "after you have hung up the Son of man, you shall know that I am he that was to come;" might they not have replied, you have given us fair warning, and we will let you live out of spite—let you live a convicted impostor? But

no ; they themselves, his bitterest enemies, voluntarily fulfilled his most remarkable prediction, and by condemning and executing him as an impostor, proved him a true prophet.

But you say, this is all mere assertion. How do we know that these miracles were foretold ? The prophecy, as well as the record of the fulfilment, may have been a mere forgery, that the one might procure credit for the other. Ah ! we have some peculiar witnesses here. Shall we produce them ? Will you promise not to start at the sight of them ? Will you not be angry with us, for bringing them forward ? The Jews ! the Jews ! again we cry. Here they are ; see, they have in their hands the prophecies of Isaiah, which I have quoted. They can prove to you, that these were not forged by Christians, but deposited in the Jewish archives, hundreds of years before Christ was born.

Are we to be charged with making God changeable, because he wrought those very miracles which he had promised, the greater part of a thousand years before ? To illustrate this, and to make it still more palpable. Suppose yourselves living in the days of Methuselah, and to have heard that venerable ancient say ; “ five hundred years hence, I will do something that you never saw me do before.” When the time comes, he remembers his promise, he keeps his word, and you see such an alteration in his actions as strikes you with surprise. Would you exclaim, what a fickle man is this Methuselah ! He has acted now as I never saw him before in all his long life ! Would not any man of sense, despise you for the charge, and exclaim, fickle ! What ! because he has kept his resolution for five hundred years, and though many summers and winters have rolled away, since he made the declaration, he has remembered it, he has not swerved from his purpose ; but, at the appointed time, done as he promised, five hundred



years ago? Call this man any thing but fickle. This is the *justum et tenacem propositi virum*.

We will illustrate this, still farther. You say, that the supposition of God's altering the course of nature, by working miracles, to confirm divine revelation, represents him as a bungling workman, who puts his hand to his machinery, to alter its operations, as circumstances may arise. We say, no; a prophecy of miracles proves that to be false. For then, we see God as a most accomplished machinist, who tells you, I have made a clock that shall go, in ordinary times at an equable rate; but, in certain peculiar seasons, it shall alter its rate and adjust itself to the sun, going faster or slower, according to the quarter of the heavens in which that luminary may be; so that you shall have no occasion to look at the time-circle on your globes, and observe the plus or minus there, to alter the clock and adjust it to the sun; for, at the proper season, the clock will of itself alter its rate of going, to accord perfectly with the great regulator of years and days. If you were to see this happen, just as the clock maker told you, would that prove him either fickle, or a bungler? Or, if a watchmaker were to say, "this watch is not ordinarily a repeater; but at a certain season it will strike the time;" and you were to find it did so, just at that hour, could you bring your mind to say, that this variation in the watch proved its maker either unskilful or fickle?

But now, we have a right to dismiss the subject of miracles, and to say, in the face of the world, we have made of them all that we said we could, and all that you said we could not. We have shown, that, if you call them juggling tricks, you should set some of your jugglers to do the like. If you say, that the trick was never played, so as to deceive the eyes of spectators, but a false report of such things has been spread abroad, then we challenge you to do so too; and to shew us, how easily men



may be made to believe in miracles, which were never even pretended to be wrought before the eyes of any one. When, unable to face the matters of fact, you turned to abstract reasonings, we have torn your arguments to tatters; we have shown, that Hume was a self-contradictory sophist; and proved, that the modern plea, of miracles making God changeable, is, as false and as silly as all that has been said against our facts.

II. Existing facts prove the revelation of the Scriptures true. Christianity has been justly called a religion of facts, and this is equally true of the Jewish religion, as revealed in the Old Testament. Now it is as justly said, that facts are stubborn things, and, when opposed to these, we have seen how flimsy are all abstract propositions, all metaphysical arguments. A child of good native sense would feel itself on firm ground, when defending a fact against a theory. If you reply, the child supposes it to be a fact that the sun is no larger than a dinner plate, I answer, no; you may easily satisfy the child that all the fact which it has grasped, is that the sun *looks* no larger, which is a real fact. The child may also be satisfied that large objects at a distance look small. All society exists by the influence of facts upon the human mind, and he who attempts to invalidate, does but establish their influence. For why does he argue with you against them, but because he admits the fact, that you are contending for them?

Now, some facts, not only prove themselves, but prove other facts also. And these latter are demonstrated with scarcely less evidence than the former. We are convinced, by facts, of the existence of a present generation of men, and hence we infer, with nearly equal certainty, the existence of a former generation. He who lives in a house which he has himself built, is scarcely more sure of this, than those who have hired one, are sure that it was built by

some other person before they took it. She who never saw her mother, no more doubts that she had one, than she questions whether she has in her arms her own child.

Divine revelation appeals, then, to existing facts, that are utterly undeniable. Here are the Jews, to whom I have appealed in the second Lecture, and no one has ventured to answer the appeal. No man can deny the existence of this singular people; no other rational solution of the difficulty they create, can be devised, than that which the Scriptures give, and this involves the truth of the Scriptures, and their authority as a revelation from God.

But from this one great fact, arise many others. That the Jews celebrate a Sabbath, on the Saturday, or seventh day of the week, is a fact which none can deny. Ask them why, and they will tell you, because God enjoined it to our fathers, on Mount Sinai. It is one of the ten words or commandments delivered by the voice of Deity, amidst awful wonders which convulsed creation. In this persuasion they expose themselves to great embarrassments and losses, every week. They can shew that this law was handed down to them from father to son, from the very period when the law is said to have been given from heaven.

We have shewn that, every year, they keep the feast of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Nothing is more natural than that such an event should be thus celebrated, and nothing is more incredible than that they should thus celebrate such an event, if it had never happened.

That they keep also, every year, what they call the feast of Passover is an undeniable fact. Ask them, what mean ye by this feast? and they will say, our fathers were, at this season, miraculously delivered from death by killing a lamb, sprinkling its blood on their door-posts, and collecting their whole family within the house, to feast on

the lamb. The same night, they were hurried out of Egypt, to pass through the Red sea, and not having time to leaven their bread, they made flour and water cakes, and, therefore, our nation, every year, keeps this feast, when it eats such cakes as these, and no other. Could a whole nation ever have been induced to celebrate a deliverance that never happened? The Jews, every year, keep the feast of Purim or Lots, in commemoration of their deliverance, by Esther, from the destruction designed for them by Haman, whose name they pronounce accursed, whenever it occurs in the reading of the roll of Esther, at that festival. Could this practice have obtained, if no such national deliverance had occurred?

There are similar existing facts which prove the truth of the great miraculous facts of the New Testament. These facts, however, differ sufficiently in their character to prove that they are not a mere imitation of the former. There is no national or annual festival instituted in the Christian religion, as in that of the Jews. On one point, however, that of a weekly Sabbath they agree, but the Christian Sabbath has a distinct modification, of a remarkable kind.

The Lord's day, then, or Christian Sabbath, commonly called Sunday, is one of the facts to which we, as Christians, appeal. No man can doubt that the celebration of this day is a universal practice among Christians. This fact, then, being undeniable, we affirm that it involves in it a proof of another, which is one of the great miraculous facts of our religion. The Lord's day is a celebration of Christ's resurrection, and a proof of that event. We are quite sure that we did not invent this practice, but found it in the world when we came into it. Common sense compels us to admit that our fathers did not invent it, nor are we less sure that *they* received it from their fathers. Thus we may go back

in a constant unbroken succession. We are sure that, at any period to which we may choose to refer, between the present time, and the day when Christ is said to have risen from the dead, it would have been impossible to introduce the Christian Sabbath, and persuade any one generation of Christians, that their fathers had received the celebration of this event, from the time of Christ's resurrection, if this had not been the fact. You may try it in imagination, at any assignable period. Conceive of such an attempt being made in the time of our commonwealth. You see or feel that it could not have succeeded. Every one would have known whether his father had celebrated such a Sabbath or not. Try it at the time of William the Conqueror. The same difficulties will meet you. There is no period on which you could fix, for the introduction of such a practice, but that of Christ's resurrection, and that is the very time when it could not have been introduced if Christ's resurrection had not happened. The witnesses to the truth or falsehood of the story were then alive.

Here, again, I would put deists to that peculiar test, of which you will say I am very fond. If you say the Christian Sabbath is an invention of a later age, and that there never was any such event as that which we celebrate, on the first day of the week; then you are as well able to do now, what you say has been done at some former period. Institute a deistical Sabbath, to celebrate the resurrection of Thomas Paine. As Saturday and Sunday are already in the possession of Jews and Christians, you may take Friday or Thursday. But you say, no: Saint Monday will suit us better, for people are more disposed to keep holiday then, and we shall more easily persuade them to fall in with our new Infidel Sunday. But perhaps some may blunder upon a difficulty here, and say, how can we do this, for Thomas Paine never rose from the dead? Well,

do you think we did not know that? But what does that signify? His resurrection is just as fit to be celebrated, though it never happened, as, upon your hypothesis, that of Jesus was. For you say, he never rose from the dead any more than Thomas Paine. Come, do not make a difficulty out of nothing; but publish abroad that the Age of Reason is fully come, and that infidels must now keep their own Sabbath, and celebrate the resurrection of their great patriarch. But be sure that you persuade them all that this was done, from the very time of Paine's death, and in the very country where he died, the place where, and the time when everybody could tell whether he rose or not; for unless you do this, you do nothing; and shew them, too, that many infidels suffered death, for preaching every where that Paine had risen from the dead. But I own that I am more than half afraid that I have pushed this test rather too far, and have almost profaned my Saviour's holy and adorable name by such an association. Yet, I cannot but be fond of putting the thing in this form; for it is a kind of common sense test, and though you may suspect that it pleases me, because I think it confounds infidels, yet I am sure, I can say, that I wish to wound them only for their good: "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

We have another existing fact to adduce, in proof of the great facts recorded in the New Testament. It is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This proves the Crucifixion of Christ. That Christians do actually celebrate this feast, is what cannot be questioned. It is equally unquestioned, that we, of this generation, did not invent this ordinance of religion. We are quite as sure that our fathers did not, and they were as sure that their fathers did not. We may proceed, in this way, to shew that Christians have, in all ages, kept this feast, up to the very time when it is said that Christ was cru-

cified. The command to celebrate the feast, declares, that it was even instituted and celebrated, the night before the Saviour was crucified, and then was ordered to be repeated till Christ should come a second time, to judge the world. Now we can affirm just the same of this as we did of the Lord's day, and if infidels object, we say to them again, Do you something of the kind, institute an infidel feast to celebrate the death of one of your leaders who departed to his account some time ago, and persuade the world that it has been observed, from that distant period when the man died a martyr for your faith, or unbelief rather.—I need not pursue this any farther.

The force of these facts will be heightened, if you will only bring them home by a comparison with other similarly attested facts: take the death of Charles the First. This is celebrated on the 29th of January, called the commemoration of King Charles's Martyrdom. Can any man in his senses doubt whether there was such a man, and whether he was put to death? Could this commemoration have been introduced, if these facts had never existed? Take again the Revolution under King William, in 1688, and you will feel that you have the same proofs of veritable fact. Think of any other event you please, and see whether a constant national celebration does not assure you of its truth.

It has been clearly proved, that miraculous facts of which the senses of men can judge, said to be wrought in the face of day, before foes as well as friends, celebrated by public acts and monuments, which may be traced up to the very time when the events are declared to have happened, must infallibly be true. One powerful reasoner tried, for twenty years, to find some event that could shake the position, but was obliged, at last, to give it up in despair. Modern infidels, if they were men of reason

and of candour, would give up their cause in despair.

But I will still further illustrate this, by a reference to a false religion, that of Mahomed. Mahomedans have taken the flight of their prophet from Mecca as the Epoch from whence they date their years. This they call the Hejira or flight. Well, you will say, why is not this as good a proof of that ancient fact as the Christian practices you have mentioned, are of the supposed facts of Scripture? It is. No man can rationally doubt that Mahomed did flee from that city. But what does that prove? Nothing in behalf of the Mahomedan religion. That Mahomed fled from a certain city, cannot prove him a true prophet, while the facts we celebrate prove the truth of our religion.

But now observe, that this is not like celebrating Mahomed's ascent to heaven on a certain miraculous beast. No one pretends to have been eye-witness of this. It is not from this event that they derive the Hejira, or date their years; and if it were, it would prove nothing; for that fabulous flight to heaven was said to be in the night, and no one was witness of it, but the impostor himself; for he took care to come back before the morning dawned.

III. History forms another external proof of our religion. Though there is much that is fabulous in what is called history, every man of common sense admits that history can prove something. The child that is born to day will, if it grow up to maturity of reason, know something about Napoleon Buona-parté and the first French revolution. None but an idiot, or a madman, can doubt that such a person rose to power, amidst the convulsions of that event. Persons and events much more remote can be proved from history. We are all quite sure that Rome was once the empress of the world, and that one of her citizens, Julius Cæsar, made himself master of his country.



Well, if history can bear witness to any thing, it can attest the truth of divine revelation, and especially of the Christian religion. The most ancient history, by many ages, is that which the Scriptures themselves contain. All uninspired histories are juniors, of far inferior authority. In fact, Herodotus, the father of profane history, began to write just when the history of the Old Testament closed. When we could not otherwise have known the history of the world, God gave it by inspiration. And how otherwise could we have learned the history of those days which elapsed before man was created? But when other writers rose, God left us to learn the history of the world from them. He does nothing in vain.

Now every human thing is at its commencement imperfect. Though the inspired history of the creation is the perfection of beautiful simplicity, Herodotus, remarkable for simplicity too, betrays imperfections and follies as striking. He designed to give the history of the Persian invasion of Greece, but he rambles over the world, as far as he knew it. He does not mention the Jews by name, but he speaks of the inhabitants of Palestine and Syria as practising circumcision. This we know is still a Jewish rite; and that the other inhabitants of Palestine did not practise circumcision, we learn from the Hebrew records, which are far more ancient and authentic than the history of Herodotus; for, in the Sacred Writings, the borderers on the Jewish territory are called uncircumcised Philistines. Many of the stories of Herodotus are grossly fabulous, and betray all the ignorance that must be expected to attend a first essay in the science of history.

Thucydides who followed, wrote only of the Peloponnesian war, which afforded no occasion for the mention of the Jews. Xenophon, who comes next, gives an account of Cyrus far preferable to that of Herodotus, and fully corroborates the Scripture

account of the great Persian conqueror. From this period, there are no Greek historians, for some ages. It must also be observed that the Greeks were notoriously vain, that though they loved knowledge, they wished to appropriate all the credit of it to themselves. Had they derived information from the Jews and their Scriptures, it would not have passed through the hands of Greeks unaltered, and it would have been retailed without due acknowledgement.

When the Romans pushed their conquests into Asia, we soon find their historians introducing to view the Jewish nation. I have, in the lecture on the Jews, given what Tacitus says of the subjugation of Judea by Pompey, and of the dominion which the Romans exercised there, till Titus destroyed the capital, and dispersed the nation through the world. But Paley has so well abridged the result of Lardner's invaluable researches, that I cannot do better than give you the quotation.

“ Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, which coincides with the thirtieth year after Christ's ascension, asserts, that the emperor, in order to suppress the rumours of having been himself the author of the mischief, procured the Christians to be accused. Of which Christians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is so much of the historian's account as belongs to our present purpose : ‘ They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city also. At first, they only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect ; afterwards *a vast multitude* were discovered by them.’ This testimony to the early propagation of Christianity is extremely material. It is from an historian of

great reputation, living near the time; from a stranger, and an enemy to the religion: and it joins immediately with the period through which the Scripture accounts extend. It establishes these points, that the religion began at Jerusalem, that it spread throughout Judea, that it had reached Rome, and not only so, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about six years after the time that St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, and something more than two years after he arrived there himself. The converts to the religion were then so numerous at Rome, that of those who were betrayed by the information of the persons first persecuted, a great multitude (*multitudo ingens*) were discovered and seized.

“It seems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus represents Christianity to have received (*repressa in præsens*) referred to the persecution at Jerusalem, which followed the death of Stephen (*Acts viii.*); and, which, by dispersing the converts, caused the institution, in some measure, to disappear. Its second eruption at the same place, and within a short time, has much in it of the character of truth. It was the firmness and perseverance of men who knew what they replied upon.

“Next in order of time, and perhaps superior in importance, is the testimony of Pliny the younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two considerable districts in the northern part of Asia Minor. The situation in which he found his province led him to apply to the emperor (*Trajan*), for his direction as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Christians. The letter in which this application is contained, was written not quite eighty years after Christ’s ascension. The president, in this letter, states the measures he had already pursued, and then adds, as his reason for resorting to the emperor’s counsel and authority, the following words:—‘Suspending all

judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice : for it has appeared to me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially upon account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering : for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain, that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented ; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims, likewise, are every where (*passim*) brought up ; whereas, for some time, there were few to purchase them. Whence it is easy to imagine, what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those that shall repent.\*

“ It is obvious to observe, that the passage of Pliny’s letter, here quoted, proves, not only that the Christians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had subsisted there for some considerable time. ‘ It is certain,’ he says, ‘ that the temples, which were almost forsaken (plainly ascribing this desertion of the popular worship to the prevalency of Christianity), begin to be more frequented : and the sacred solemnities, after a *long* intermission, are revived.’ There are also two clauses in the former part of the letter which indicate the same thing ; one, in which he declares that he had ‘ never been present at any trials of Christians, and therefore, knew not what was the usual subject of enquiry and punishment, or how far either was wont to be urged ;’ the second clause is the following : ‘ Others were named by an informer, who, at first, confessed themselves Christians, and afterwards denied it ; the rest said, they

\* C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvi.

had been Christians, some three years ago, some longer, and some above twenty years.' It is also apparent, that Pliny speaks of the Christians as a description of men well known to the person to whom he writes. His first sentence concerning them is, 'I have never been present at the trials of Christians.' This mention of the name of Christians, without any preparatory explanation, shews, that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter, and the person to whom it was addressed. Had it not been so, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor, that he had met with a certain set of men in the province, called Christians.

"Here, then, is a very signal evidence of the progress of the Christian religion in a short space. It was not fourscore years after the crucifixion of Jesus when Pliny wrote this letter; nor seventy years since the apostles of Jesus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great distance from Judea, the centre from which the religion spread; yet in these provinces, Christianity had long subsisted, and Christians were now in such numbers as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor, that they were found, not only in cities, but in villages, and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded so much as to have produced a visible desertion of the temples; that beasts brought to market for victims had few purchasers; that the sacred solemnities were much neglected: circumstances noted by Pliny, for the express purpose of shewing to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new institution.

"No evidence remains, by which it can be proved that the Christians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reason been offered to shew why they should be so. Christianity did not begin

in these countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the description in Pliny's letter to the state of Christianity in those provinces, even if no other account of the same subject had come down to us ; but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the representations given of the general state of Christianity in the world, by Christian writers of that and the next succeeding age.

“Justin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny, and one hundred and six after the ascension, has these remarkable words : ‘ There is not a nation, either of Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe by the name of the crucified Jesus.’\* Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Justin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in these terms : ‘ We were but of yesterday : and we have filled your cities, islands, towns and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum.’”

IV. Prophecies fulfilled are another proof of the truth of our religion.

I scarcely know whether to call this an external or an internal proof. You must read the Book, in order to know the prophecies ; but you may judge of their fulfilment, though you know little of the contents of revelation. As miracles are an appeal to omnipotence, proving that the Almighty gave this revelation ; so prophecy is an appeal to omniscience, shewing that the All-wise speaks to us here. However infidels may affect to despise this species of proof, as well as that derived from miracles, every candid man must admit, that, as truly as the sight of one raised from the dead, would vanquish all theoretical objections to miracles, so surely might such a prediction

\* *Dicl. cum Tryph.*

be given, that the fulfilment of it would produce an irresistible conviction of the omniscience of its author.

There are so many of the prophecies of Scripture already fulfilled that I cannot even glance at them all. I might mention the prophecy of Noah concerning the flood, from which, if he had not foreknown it, he could not have been saved, and of the occurrence of which we have abundance of proof. The prediction concerning his three sons is fulfilling to this day. The prophecy of Abram's seed, their distinction from all nations, and their dispersion through the world, has been mentioned in a former lecture. Ezekiel foretold, that Egypt, from histime, should be a base nation, and though it was the site of the earliest and most splendid empire, it has been for ages the slave of mean lords.

Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is now fulfilling. This contained a view of the only empires that should rise in the world, till Christ's kingdom should be universal. The golden head of the image which the king saw, was interpreted to mean the Babylonish empire; the silver breast and arms, the Persian, which profane as well as inspired historians say, overthrew the Babylonians, capturing and ruining the golden city; the belly and thighs of brass exhibited the Græco-Macedonian empire, founded by Alexander, which we all know conquered the Persian; and then the legs of iron foretold the strength of the Roman empire, which destroyed that of Alexander's successors. Now the feet of this image, terminating in ten toes, composed partly of iron and partly of clay, shewed that there was to be no fifth universal empire, but smaller kingdoms were to rule the world, having in them the elements of strength and weakness, such as those kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided, have exhibited. But these kingdoms



shall themselves be broken up by the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that is, by Christ's kingdom, small at first, but swelling into a mountain, and filling the whole earth. Now it is easy enough to shew, by good historical evidence, that this prophecy has been in the world more than 2,000 years. This can be satisfactorily proved both by Jews and Christians; for the Hebrew Bible, and the Greek translation, called the Septuagint, and the New Testament, are all witnesses to the fact.

But how should Daniel know what great empires would succeed each other? How could any mortal tell that the Roman empire, not then in existence, should, from a few shepherds huts under the government of Romulus, rise to universal dominion, so that Italy should rule Asia? How could the prophet discover that the fourth empire would be the last? Why might there not be another to succeed the Roman, and a sixth to follow that, and so on, while the world lasts? But we know that the Roman was the last of those dominant powers, and that Europe has, ever since Rome fell, been divided into small kingdoms. All attempts at universal monarchy have failed. Many were afraid that Buonaparte would succeed; but I always thought that he would have none but a ginger-bread empire, that would be devoured ere it was scarcely formed. Not that I am a prophet, but I believe the prophets, and therefore know that no other universal dominion is to come, but the kingdom of Christ, which shall fill the earth.

Christ's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans seemed little likely to be fulfilled. The Romans were then in quiet possession of the country, and it was not their custom to destroy the tributary states, which they honoured with the name of allies. Who could have expected that a nation so feeble as the Jews would be mad enough to mea-

sure swords with the masters of the world? But within that generation, Titus ploughed up the foundations of Jerusalem

The conversion of the Gentile nations to the Christian faith was, when predicted, utterly improbable. The grand doctrine of our religion, that salvation is to be had, only by faith in a Jew, who was executed as a criminal, on a gibbet called the cross, was, beyond what we can conceive, shocking to the pride, under the name of the reason, of those who followed what Gibbon calls the elegant mythology of the Greeks and Romans. Yet the rulers of the world soon renounced all the gods of the Pantheon for the cross of the man of Nazareth.

But the grand prophecy of Scripture is that which foretold the coming of Christ. "To him gave all the prophets witness." This I have unfolded in the lecture on the Jews. Nothing remains, then, but to repeat the challenge I have so often given.

Let any infidel who thinks his name or writings will go down to posterity, risk his reputation upon such a guess, or chance, as he thinks the prophecy of Christ and its fulfilment to have been. Let him begin at once, and publish a prophecy that some great personage will rise and alter the state of the whole world. Fix the period. Let it be five hundred, or a thousand years hence. Foretell the race from which he shall descend. Limit it to the line of some royal family that is well known and guarded with jealous care in some national archives. Then determine the country in which he shall be born, point out the very town, and describe the circumstances of the times. Pourtray the character of the person, paint him to the life, foretell his actions; but let them be such as no other man ever performed; describe his death; give his dying words; show how he shall be buried, and tell what influence he shall have, after death. Then take your chance for the fulfilment, by some lucky adventure; and

be contented to be thought either a prophet, or an impostor and a fool, according as the prediction shall be fulfilled, or shall utterly fail. But even this would be no perfect parallel, for many writers should concur, to complete the prediction, each successive pen adding a stroke to the preceding, through thousands of years; and afterwards, every event should happen, in the exact order of time and place which the prediction announced.

But, without being a prophet, I may venture to foretell that infidels will never accept my challenge.

Now, this evidence from prophecies fulfilled, we enjoy to a greater degree than the first believers, and thus we receive a counterpoise to their superior advantages who were eye witnesses to miracles.

A review of this contest must close the present lecture.

Infidels have long boasted of their progress and their numbers. They had been met by fair argument, both from the pulpit and the press; but they clamoured for oral discussion; and because this was not granted, they proclaimed aloud that we were afraid, though they must have known that far other motives would lead most to decline an oral controversy. Long and deeply had I mused on the course to be adopted. Some of the proposals made I scorned; but I was not satisfied that none but ordinary methods should be employed in extraordinary times. Having, at length, determined on delivering a double course of lectures; I fixed those on the internal evidences for the evening of the Lord's-day, that this subject might be discussed in the calm and devotional way which is best suited to the subject, and most conducive to the edification of serious inquirers. But, having determined on giving the external evidences, in the evening of one of the working days, I thought I might give public notice that any one should be at liberty, at the close of the lecture, to call in question its truth.

I was not unaware of what might be said against this course. Some thought it a degradation to religion, to suffer it to be thus called in question. But I knew that the ancient prophets and apostles, with our Redeemer at their head, had suffered themselves to be questioned by unbelievers; and though infidels have no right to disturb religious meetings, as they often have done, it does not follow that we may not voluntarily give them permission to speak.

Our religion goes upon the avowed supposition that man is fallen into a state of ignorance, carelessness, unbelief, perverseness, and enmity to God; and that unbelievers take the liberty of disputing with their Maker, and arraigning, as well the truth, as the sanctity of his word. That God should say to such creatures, "come now and let us reason together," "bring forth your strong reasons," is indeed a stretch of condescension that may well astonish us. But it is to him most glorious. He then appears like the sun in its evening declination, remitting, indeed, somewhat of its meridian glare, but making ample compensation by the apparent increase of its orb, and its more varied beauties, as well as milder rays. Who are we, then, that we should scorn to stoop and expose ourselves to the contradiction of sinners?

But pious persons were afraid of the pernicious consequences of suffering infidel objections to be heard by Christian ears. Should they not, however, reflect that many of the interrogatories of the captious and the wicked are recorded in the word of God? Does not Paul remind us, that some would impudently say, "why does God find fault; for who has resisted his will?"

Is it possible for Christians to mingle in the world, without hearing the objections and sneers, if not the arguments of infidels? Are our young friends to be left unfurnished with answers? Are they continually to hear the challenges of infidels,

and the mighty boast—that Christian ministers are afraid to meet the foe face to face? Was it not desirable that something new should be attempted? Are not the days for ever gone, when authority could put a gag into the mouths of unbelievers, to forbid them to utter what is in their hearts? And should we wish these days to return? Have they not done to revelation far more harm than good? The calm they produced was deceitful; it generated pestilence; and the silence was that of the grave. If we must now return to the stormy scenes in which Christianity arose, will not these purify the atmosphere? Though the hurricane sweep away some to perdition, will it not leave to the church and to the world, a more pure and invigorating air?

Did not the Reformation exhibit such scenes of conflict as those in which our religion first rose to dominion? Was any thing more favourable to that great event of the 15th century, than the public disputations that were held between the votaries of Rome and those who were struggling for a purer faith? Has not a time of religious revival always been a season of hard conflict? And has religion ever been called to contend in the high places of the field, without coming off more than conqueror, bringing with her both her trophies and her spoils?

But it must be granted, that, though we are not afraid of our cause, we may fear for its advocates. This, and this alone, made me hesitate. I was reminded that a fool may ask a question which a wise man, at the spur of the moment, may not be able to answer. For though the answer might be easy and obvious, and though the person questioned might be most familiarly acquainted with it; yet, it might not occur, amidst the excitement of a public debate. Thus an envenomed and uncandid opponent might be furnished with an apparent triumph, which might do more harm than twenty satisfactory answers to other questions of greater real difficulty

and importance could do good. But I was satisfied of the propriety of making this attempt, and therefore I felt that this was the hour to throw myself upon the promise of my Lord. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Luke xxi. 14, 15.

A greater objection than all that I have mentioned remains behind. It was dreaded by myself, and therefore I cannot wonder that others participated in the terror, that blasphemous things would be uttered which could have no tendency to elicit any truth, but were designed to shake men's faith, by polluting the soul, and blunting the moral sense. Against this, I determined to oppose a firm front. We were on our own ground. A chairman, upon whose gentlemanly courtesy, and Christian firmness, I could depend, presided in the meeting; and we were determined to dissolve it, whenever the debate should be pushed to an extreme, offensive to decency and common sense.

We made the experiment, and what was the consequence of the discussion after the first Lecture? The only opponent that ventured to present himself, attempted to turn the inquiry into another channel than that which the Lecture required. To questions so irrelevant, nothing but a benevolent solicitude for the instruction of the audience, required that any answer should be given. When an attempt was made to approach the subject, it was by catching at things that were not essential to the argument. As the Lecturer never asserted that *all* the miracles of Jesus were public, he might have refused to say any thing in reply to those that were adduced as private. But these were so badly selected, that it was easily shewn that the one wrought at the marriage of Cana of Galilee, and the resurrection of Christ, were any thing but private. The resurrec-



tion of Lazarus, which had been mentioned, was afterwards overlooked by both parties. But any attentive reader of the Scripture narrative may see that this miracle was sufficiently public. A final attempt was made to divert the discussion, in order to shew that we are not accountable for our belief; but it is hoped that the contrary was made sufficiently manifest.

The second Lecture appealed to the Jews, as living witnesses to Divine Revelation. But when I had brought my witnesses into court, and they had given their evidence, no one ventured to face them, to cross-examine them, or to prove their testimony irrelevant, or contradictory, or false. Instead of this, an attempt was made to dispute upon the chapter that was read in public worship. Afterwards, the whole effort of the infidel was to prove that the Jews were not a nation but a religious sect. The contrary was demonstrated by all the evidence that can prove any nation to exist upon the face of the earth; for if a people, living in a certain territory, within fixed boundaries, with a peculiar language, a national code, king, and army, is not a nation, what constitutes a nation? But the Lecturer was not called to meet this ridiculous quibble, had he not determined, in every instance, to take the lion by the beard. For what signifies it whether you call the Jews a nation or a sect? The men are the same, and their testimony to Revelation is the same.

It would seem that some of the questions were prepared before the Lecture was delivered, anticipating its argument, and presuming that it would be the dispersion of the Jews, as a fulfilment of Christ's prediction, and a punishment for rejecting and crucifying him. But this was so far from being the grand argument, that it was scarcely even glanced at. Yet, mighty efforts were made to prove that the dispersion of the Jews took place in the



days of Esther, ages before the birth of Christ. But even a child, well educated, might know that the ten tribes were dispersed, and the two tribes carried captive, before that period ; while that, which is by emphasis, *the* dispersion, occurred after the return of the *Jews*, strictly so called, and was effected by the Romans, who destroyed the capital city, and drove the nation over the face of the earth.

This debate was closed by a dispute on the soil of Palestine, though the questioner mentioned Jerusalem, as if he supposed the whole nation lived in one city. The old infidel argument, that the holy land never could have supported the multitudes which the Bible asserts to have lived there, was urged as of great strength. The determination of the Lecturer to meet every objection, in its full force, induced him to shew, that the most dense population may live on most unfavourable spots. For, in the latitude of Judea, such are the advantages of climate, that an industrious people may overcome every disadvantage of soil. As to the present appearance of the site of Jerusalem, no man can stand on the Acropolis of Athens, and look round upon the scene, without asking, where could those myriads have lived who ventured to resist the millions whom Xerxes brought to conquer Greece ? It is on record, that, while Israel obeyed God, a special providence was pledged to watch over their country's good, and that their disobedience would blast the very face of nature with a curse. This required, not a miracle, strictly so called, but the utmost displays of that providence which still makes the physical state of a country depend upon the moral character of its inhabitants.

But an easier ground of defence lies open to the believers in revelation. Palestine was not all rock, though the Scripture itself declares that Mount Zion was. The vale of the Jordan, would, in the

hands of an industrious and cultivated people, present one of the richest and loveliest scenes that the whole earth contains.

The third Lecture, designed to shew that religion is no priestcraft, was interrupted by the crowd and the clamour, which made it necessary to dismiss the assembly.

The fourth Lecture was a challenge to infidels, to produce their own system, that we may know what they believe, or do not believe, and may judge of their reasons. To this, no reply was made by any one of the crowd of infidels who attended. The solitary question that was proposed, was no answer to the challenge, and was a mere repetition of a question proposed at the close of the second lecture—whether an infidel might not be saved as a good man?

Such has been the mighty result of all the clamorous outcry for discussion, raised by those who boast—we are a hundred thousand in London alone! The mountain has brought forth, and even its mouse has dropped still-born. But while the thing is almost too contemptible, even for ridicule, it is melancholy enough for tears. A hundred thousand led away by a pernicious error, for which they cannot produce a rational argument! Clamouring for discussion, and when it is granted, systematically shunning the question in debate! Affirming, that religion is contradicted by history, and when history is produced, objecting to it because it is not Sacred Scripture! Denouncing Revelation as metaphysically false, and when metaphysics are appealed to, not venturing to face one of her arguments! Complaining of priestcraft, only because it stands in the way of infidelcraft! With consummate effrontery, opposing the morality of infidelity to that of Christianity! Yet, a blind adder can sting, and a mad Martin can consign York's beautiful Minster to flames. The more ignorant, the more impudent,

the more vicious, the more reckless a man is, the more mischief of a certain kind he can effect. Hunters so desperate can find plenty of game. So many myriads grow up destitute of all parental or pastoral instruction, that they fall an easy prey to those who "hunt for souls." When hell opens its cathedral, vice publishes its code of morals, the roaring lion becomes the pastor, blasphemy composes the sermon, and laughter makes the music, numerous will be the flock. For broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are there that go in thereat. They who love to sneer rather than to argue, to blaspheme rather than to pray, and to indulge their passions rather than to subdue them, will think infidelity a better religion than Christianity. To him who lives the life of a fiend, it will appear a privilege to die the death of a dog.

But while, with our Saviour, we weep over those who seal their own doom; "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we would persuade men." We would "save them with fear, plucking them out of the fire," even at the hazard of scorching ourselves in the attempt. For the patience of God will not always wait. Justice, though she has a leaden foot and moves slowly, advances surely, and treads heavily. The arrow of vengeance is on the string, and the longer the bow is in drawing the mightier is its spring, and the more suddenly shall the object of its aim fall, pierced to the heart. It shall be some consolation to be able to say, "their blood is not on my head." Whatever may be the result of this contest, I shall have delivered my own soul, and the young of my own flock will "know the certainty of the things wherein they have been instructed."

But I have evidence that this labour has not been in vain. I have, during the course of the lectures, received more than one letter, and obtained various information of their effects. Infidels have owned themselves ashamed of their champion. Of others

I may say, "the shew of their countenances has witnessed against them," that, if they persist in infidelity, it is on other grounds than those of argument. The more secret and sober infidel, who was ashamed of the party, has avowed himself convinced, and is now ashamed of the cause.

If justice seize the victims who are tottering on the verge of the unpardonable sin, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; mercy will carry off her trophies, and prompting them to confession, will induce them to devote the life snatched from perdition, to undo the mischief, over which they could weep tears of blood. One such instance has recently occurred. A person who had figured as an author, by writing atheistical tracts, has been convinced of the existence of God. It now comes out, that the author was a mere retailer of the sophisms of Mirabeau; for the works of modern infidels are composed, not by pens, but by scissors. All they can do is to cut leaves out of other men's books, and publish them as their own. Almost every thing that wears the appearance of argument in Paine's Age of Reason, is stolen from the works of former infidels; or of Christians, whose difficulties he has quoted and suppressed their solutions.

For, with a boastful parade of learning, the grossest ignorance is betrayed. Plain unlearned men suppose that where there is a grand display of hard words, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, there must be something wonderfully wise; and if they cannot understand it, the cause lies in their own ignorance. But they may comfort themselves with the assurance that all this pompous parade is as unintelligible to the learned too. The Hebrew that presents such a face of erudition is false. Those who know Hebrew better than he who has paraded it in opposition to religion, know nothing of *his* Hebrew. But, O! it is horrible, to see an accountable creature playing these pernicious tricks. For he must know, either

that he is ignorant of what he pretends to teach, or that he is wilfully perverting knowledge to deceive the ignorant. I say this before the world; that it may be reported to those whom it concerns, and that the unwary may be delivered out of the net in which the deceiver is attempting to entangle them.

It is, indeed, a mere spider's web, which even a fly of ordinary strength might break. But, alas! there are too many who love to be deceived, and of whom justice might say, "then let them be deceived."

But fain would we see mercy interpose. Let me entreat those who are tainted with infidelity, to retire from the clamour of a Rotunda, to the silence of the closet. There, take the Bible, and prostrating yourselves before the Father of lights, implore his illuminating grace. Search and compare. If you meet with difficulties, neither refuse to examine them, nor immediately reject the book on account of them. You know there are difficulties in many things which you equally know to be true. Be not *afraid* to find the Bible true lest you should be compelled to forsake your sins. Death will soon tear you from them. But how terrible will that death be! What you have heard of the evidences of revelation will then come to your remembrance, and plant thorns in your dying pillow. Flee, while there is hope, from your sins to your Saviour, and be not deterred by the despairing thought, "God will not forgive me now;" "Christ himself cannot save one who has reviled him as an impostor." This is the voice of an enemy who, when you have broken the snare of blasphemous presumption, would bind you in that of murderous despair. "All manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven to them that believe in the name of Jesus."



SECOND ANTIDOTE TO INFIDELITY.

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# LECTURES

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF

**Divine Revelation :**

DELIVERED AT SILVER STREET CHAPEL,

IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1831.

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BY JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

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## A SUMMARY

OF THE

### INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF REVELATION.

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PSALM xii. 6.

*The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

WHAT the Roman poet said of Troy, may be applied to the citadel of our faith, "it is attacked within and without." After defending its external evidences therefore, it is necessary to prove that its internal character is such as to prove it divine. To be satisfied on both points, is essential to a complete conviction that the Bible is a revelation from heaven.

As the works of God will bear not only the minute scrutiny of the microscope, which discovers their hidden beauty; but also the boundless range of the telescope, which displays their vast extent; so the word of God, while it contains distinct doctrines which will endure the strictest investigation, forms a grand whole which will satisfy the most comprehensive mind. Intending, therefore, to examine those discoveries of revelation which have encountered the severest reflections, I shall introduce these discourses by a general glance at the complete body of internal evidence which the sacred Scriptures can adduce to prove themselves divine.

What, then, may an acute and reasonable inquirer demand as a condition of his belief in the sacred book? Can he justly ask more than this—

that the revelation should give such a discovery of God as commends itself to right reason—that it should afford such information concerning man as we need to obtain—that it should produce such effects as shall prove the practical benefits of revelation—and that it should be capable of enduring the severest scrutiny by those who are not well affected to its claims? All this I will endeavour to meet.

I. The Sacred Scriptures make such a discovery of God as proves them divine.—To a rational man, can there be a more interesting subject of inquiry than Deity? May I not say, that even an Atheist must, if he be not almost a brute, be racked with curious inquiries concerning the cause of all things? But I confine my appeals to Deists, who profess to admit a God. Can, then, such a man cease to inquire, What is God? What are his attributes? What his designs? And how may we know him? Can the Deist treat these inquiries contemptuously, without being condemned by his own conscience, and exposed to the severest of all tortures, that which is inflicted on him by his own contempt? A rational and sincere Theist must, on being presented with the Bible, ask, What does it profess to tell me about that great and mysterious Being whom I am anxious to know? Will it let me into the grand secret which I cannot otherwise penetrate? To this we reply, the Book of Scripture, like that of nature, is full of God. He that is its true Author is its perpetual theme. This is the most important of its discoveries; and to satisfy your just cravings after the knowledge of God, the revelation of himself was given. I observe, then,

1. That the discoveries of the Scriptures concerning the *nature* of God prove the book divine.

Speaking in general terms, the Bible declares “God to be all in all,” and that “this is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, who.”

he has sent." To this, right reason loudly echoes. Every reflecting mind must admit, that, if knowledge of any kind is interesting, an acquaintance with God must possess supreme interest. For all other beings are but the effects of God's nature and attributes. To know him, is to know them; as he is the Fountain, they are the rills.

But, in proportion as this knowledge is valuable and comprehensive, it is difficult. In one sense, indeed, it is obvious enough, lying upon the surface of things; but, in another, it is arduous, and far beyond us, compelling even a mighty and devout mind to exclaim, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain to it. Who by searching can find out God?" "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Thus speaks Scripture, Job xi. 7—9.

Now the Bible gives such an account of God as a child may learn, and the most profound metaphysician must approve; such as has, in fact, been the theme of admiration to the most exalted minds which this world could ever boast. For the more mighty the intellect, the more intensely will it be employed on this subject; and the more sensible will it be of the difficulty of the theme, so as to aspire most ardently after those aids of which it will deeply feel its need. A flippant rejection of assistance in this study, is an infallible proof of a superficial mind or an alienated heart—a mind that is too superficial to perceive a difficulty, or a heart too depraved to welcome a wholesome truth.

The Scriptures teach the eternity of God—"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday

when it is past, and as a watch in the night."—Ps. xc. 1, 2. 4.

"The eternal God," "the everlasting God," are expressions frequently occurring in Scripture, of which the whole volume proceeds on this principle, that God is, in the strictest and most complete sense, eternal.

On this subject, it is difficult to ascertain what is the doctrine of the ancient heathen, whether poets or philosophers. It is certain, however, that Jupiter, whom Homer calls "the father of men and gods," is said to have been *born*, and Crete is pointed out as his birth-place. If Saturn be deemed the parent of Jupiter, who has himself been termed the universal parent, to say nothing of the inconsistency of this theology, Saturn himself is equally supposed to have been born.

It will be found, on investigation, that all the gods of the heathen, in both ancient and modern times, were supposed to have had a beginning; and that no people, who were destitute of Divine Revelation, have had any notion of a deity that was strictly and properly eternal.

Those, however, who boast of rejecting every thing that they cannot comprehend, will be so far from honouring the Bible for revealing the eternity of God, that they will make it a reason for rejecting a book which contains a doctrine so incomprehensible.

But to all such objectors we say, how can you get rid of the difficulties of eternity? We are as sensible of them as you are; but we know not how we can rationally avoid them. Something eternal you must admit. For if you deny all eternal existence, you must then say, all that is now in existence had a beginning, and there was a period when there was pure absolute nothing. Now muse over this idea. Let it sink down into your soul; and be sure that you have complete possession of it. Then say, if this had ever been the case, must it not always have continued? If, from eternity there had been

nothing, there could have been nothing to eternity; or, in other words, an eternal nothing must have been an everlasting nothing; or, to make it still more plain, if non-existence had possessed the attribute of a past eternity, it must also have had that of a future or continual eternity.

For how could any thing have arisen out of nothing? What could have altered that state of pure non-existence, which you suppose to have once preceded the present existences? There is in nothing no creative power, no reason for the existence of any thing. A rational mind cannot escape the conviction; that if there had ever been the complete absence of being, this must have been perpetual, and the impossibility of the existence of any thing must have followed.

But we know that something now exists; for we ourselves are here reasoning on this subject. Therefore it is impossible that there ever should have been a period when there was absolutely nothing in existence; or, in other words, something must always have existed.

If, then, we must renounce our reason, or admit the eternity of something, all the difficulties of an eternal existence form no sufficient reason for rejecting the doctrine. Therefore, those are convicted of folly, I had almost said madness, who reject every thing which they cannot comprehend; for eternal existence, which we are compelled by present existence to admit, is incomprehensible, and it seems almost certain that none but an eternal being can comprehend eternity.

But, you will observe, that I have not yet said what that eternal something must be. I have confined myself to the simple demonstration of the eternity of something. But the Scriptures say, *that eternal existence is God*. He only hath immortality. He is the first being, as well as the last. He was the ancient of days, and all other beings

are his juniors, to whom he may say, "Ye are of yesterday, and know nothing." He once existed alone; for though every thing else had a beginning, he had none.

Now let the Deist make the most of this difficulty; let him call it mysterious, incomprehensible, or, if he please, contradictory. Only let him recollect that we have already seen, we must either renounce our reason, or admit something to be eternal. Let him, then, produce any thing else that has a better claim to eternity than Deity has. That eternal something which we have found to be necessary to account for the present existence of any thing, must have the properties that could give existence to what is now in being; for an insufficient cause is no cause at all. The Creator, then, is the being to whom we are compelled to ascribe eternity. Admit this, and every thing else is easy: deny this, and every thing else is not only mysterious, but inexplicable, and even contradictory. Thus the first great doctrine of Scripture concerning God, in which we acknowledge there is the greatest difficulty, is not only proved true, but absolutely necessary to be admitted, unless we would renounce our reason, by becoming universal sceptics, or, in other words, madmen.

But this eternity of Deity, of which the ancient heathens seem to have had no notion, and which philosophers deduce with much effort from necessary principles, the Scriptures assert as a simple fact. As you would inform the child of that which he could not deduce from reason, but which you know to be true; so does the eternal Father here assert, in what you would call a simple and barbarous age, that astounding truth which, in the most advanced stage of society, the most acute metaphysician is compelled to receive.

The *infinity* of God is another doctrine of revelation. This also presents a boundless idea at which



reason labours, and the mightiest mind staggers: but we must submit and adore. Necessity, or the opposite of contingency, is included in the idea of eternity; and necessity implies infinity. Having shown this, in the fourth Lecture on the external evidences, I shall not farther enlarge. The Bible ascribes infinity to God, who there says, "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Ps. cxxxix. 7—10.

But how remote is this from the notions of all those who have not been instructed from the Bible! Not merely the vulgar among the heathen, but their poets, sages, and philosophers have adored limited and local deities. If modern Deists admit the infinity of Deity, it is because they have lighted their taper at the sun of revelation, though they do not know, or will not own, their obligation.

Omniscience, or infinite knowledge, the Bible ascribes to God. All present, all past, all future things are said to be open to his view. "Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world." "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."—Ps. cxxxix. 1—6.

This also is capable of demonstration, as far as that term can be applied to such a subject. For this also is included in God's infinity and eternity. To a necessary being, there can be no limitation. By knowing himself, God knows every thing. He knows all that he himself does, and all the possible workings of those powers which he has imparted to the creatures. He knows, therefore, all possible things, in which all futures are included. But if you say, possible things suppose that some are impossible, and this would limit God's power; I answer, that by possible things, I mean such as do not include a contradiction, and which are not merely words without ideas.

Homer makes Jupiter go to the tablets of the Fates, to know what must happen in futurity. But the Scriptures teach that all knowledge is included in the divine consciousness, and counsels, or designs. The theology of the sublimest of heathen poets is childish, while that of Moses and the Hebrew prophets is as sublime as it is true.

Omnipotence, or infinite power, is attributed to God in Scripture. He is termed "the Almighty," and all power is said to belong to God. "With God all things are possible." The divine omnipotence is, in the opening of the volume of revelation, taught in the most effectual, because the most practical way, by presenting God to view, creating the world by a word. This, which was beyond the conception of the heathen, who seem to have had no notion of creation, properly so called, may be shewn to be metaphysically true. For beings that are limited may be proved not eternal, and therefore may be shown to have been created; while the infinity of Deity, included in necessity and eternity, implies omnipotence; as every thing short of this is limitation. But there can be no prior limiting cause to the first cause, and nothing can have power to resist him, because nothing has any other power

than that which it received from him, who can take away what he gave. Homer, however, represents Jupiter bound hand and foot by the Fates, but who the Fates are, or whence they derived their all-controlling power, we are left to guess.

To advance. Of all the discoveries of revelation this is the most decisive and important, that God is *love*. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” In love, or benevolence, we may include complacency in those who are benevolent, mercy to those who have offended, and patience towards those whose conduct is provoking. “The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever.” “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”—2 Peter iii. 8, 9.

To prove the benevolence of Deity may be unnecessary, as few will be disposed to dispute what all have so much reason to wish to be true. Yet, it may be useful to observe, that the pleasure which our Creator has made to attend love, and the pains with which hatred is punished, are proofs that the Supreme Controuler of events approves love and condemns hate. Nor can any reason be given why God should be any thing else but love; for his own being must be the object of his own approbation and delight; and we all know that, when we are not at war with ourselves, we are disposed to be friends to others.

But where, among all the philosophers of antiquity, can we find such a sentence as this, *God is love*? The heathen nations have little, or perhaps no other idea of their deities, than that of mighty

giants; and the utmost that savages expect from their gods is, that they will do them no harm.

The holiness and justice of God may be shewn to be included in benevolence. For the hatred of God to sin, and his just determination to punish it, are but opposition to that which opposes the good of the universe. I need not spend many words, to shew that the gods of those who had not the light of revelation were any thing but holy.

The blessedness of God, who in Scripture is said to be "blessed for ever," is the natural and necessary result of consummate benevolence, joined to almighty power. This idea must be welcome to all virtuous creatures, who cannot but rejoice in the happiness of the best of beings, the parent of all others.

The immutability of God is taken for granted by Deists, when they charge miracles with representing God as changeable. But we have seen that the charge is false, and that there is nothing in Scripture contrary to its own assurance, that "the Lord changeth not." This must be an attribute of the eternal and necessary being, who necessarily is all that he is. How delightful should it be to feel assured of the continuance of all those excellencies which have claimed and acquired our approbation and esteem! But what have the mere children of nature known of the immutability of Deity?

I shall enter no further into the revealed character of Deity, than merely to shew that the Bible says, *God is a Spirit*. The materiality of Deity, though the universal notion of those who have not the Scriptures, is most repugnant to reason. For the divisibility of matter, and the aggregation of particles, which constitutes all material bodies, are opposed to the idea of eternity. The particles must be supposed to exist, prior to their formation into bodies; and as the presence of one body excludes that of another, the known existence of material

bodies, such as our own, renders the infinity of a material deity impossible. Matter is inert, and requires the presence and influence of something else, such as what we call spirit, to give it activity; so that the poet expressed a philosophical axiom, when he said, *mens agitat molem*, mind moves the mass.

Turn, now, and examine the theology of the most cultivated nations, that were not illuminated by revelation. Among those most remote from Judea, none could compare with the Chinese. They call theirs, the celestial empire, and think all other nations little better than barbarians. They are said to have had printing, and the mariner's compass, and gunpowder, a thousand years before they were known in Europe. Some of their manufactures are the most elegant specimens of human skill and refinement. But what do they know of God? Nothing. In their theology, reason and religion are as grossly violated, as among the rudest savages that wear the human shape.

But of all the heathen, we are best acquainted with the Greeks and Romans. Their pens have conferred immortality upon their genius. They are our teachers in poetic and prose composition, in history and in works of fiction, in rhetoric and logic, in mathematics, and architecture, and sculpture. But what, again we ask, did they know of God? There are in their writings some fine sentences concerning Deity; but they lie as sparks buried under dead coals, and have every appearance of having been borrowed by men who knew not how to use them. For what influence had they in forming the religion of their age and nation? Homer's gods are as contemptible as his poetry is sublime. The religion of Socrates is unworthy of his morals; though even these are tainted. Cicero's Treatise on the Nature of the Gods, exhibits the melancholy spectacle of a fine mind groping in the dark after the most inte-

resting objects of human research. Where revelation has not shed its beams, every people under heaven, whether savage or polished, feeble or mighty, simple or learned, has formed notions of Deity, which equally confound our reason and shock our moral sense, combining all that is contemptible in meanness, with all that is ridiculous in absurdity, and all that is hateful in vice.

Tell us, now, why Moses and the Hebrew prophets, Jesus and the Christian apostles, have risen, not only above their own nation and age, but above all nations and all ages? The Jews were not famous for mental science, or metaphysical abstractions, and the greater part of the Scriptures were written in a very remote and simple age; yet the scriptural account of Deity is the only one that has been able to stand the test of time, and secure the approbation of the most cultivated minds, in an advanced period of society, when Leibnitz, and Locke, and Hartley have applied their powerful genius to the science of mind. Why has Moses, the earliest of known writers, succeeded in that most difficult department, the knowledge of God, where hosts of giant minds have failed? For not a single truth concerning Deity has been added to the discoveries of Scripture; but whatever men have said that is good has been borrowed from the Bible, and whatever is their own is good for nothing.

Can any other satisfactory reason be assigned but this, that the writers of Scripture had communications from Deity, and drawing their knowledge from the fountain-head, were employed to impart to us what they learned from him who intimately knows Himself? The simplest child could give a better account of the person, manners and sentiments of his father, with whom he had conversed, than could be excogitated by the most acute philosopher, who had never seen the man, or received communications from him. The candid and discerning reader of the



Scriptures must perceive, that their account of God is the result, not of laboured investigation, ascending from first principles to sublime demonstrations, as Euclid advances, from a point and a line, to the recondite properties of the most complicated forms, but of communication with the source of divine knowledge, the Deity, who, like the sun, can be seen, only by his own light.

Let those who reject this solution, tell us why the Bible is the only book which gives us, at once an original and a rational account of God. Let them say, why the only men who have succeeded in this most difficult of all themes, are the last from whom this could have been expected. For the Jews were not only shut out from intercourse with what would be called the learned world, but the sacred writers were, according to the hypothesis of Deists, impostors, who attempted to palm upon us the abortion of their own brains for the lively oracles of God. And yet this supposed imposture is found to be the only metaphysical and moral truth. He that believes this contradiction, must be himself a contradiction ; for, though an unbeliever, he has an enormous faith, and should never taunt Christians with swallowing absurdities.

2. The moral government of God, as described in Scripture, proves it divine.

Next to the knowledge of the nature and attributes of Deity, an acquaintance with the moral *rule* of the Creator, is the most important benefit that can be conferred on us by revelation. The Scriptures are called the law and the statutes of Jehovah, and are regarded by believers as their moral code. Codification, as it is called, is the favourite child of modern times. But, while it has considerable worth, it is only as long as a code of law is new and untried, that it is supposed to be a panacea for all the evils of ancient and modern jurisprudence. It cannot



prevent suits, and as soon as these occur, it is found to be too brief; so that the decisions of judges and courts make additions to the code which involve ordinary minds in an intricate maze. If, then, the Scriptures have little of the form of a perfect code, we have no right to conclude from thence that they are ill-adapted to moral use. But in that which is charged as a defect, the word harmonizes with the works of God. Order is, indeed, heaven's first law; but God has adopted an order altogether his own, which those who attempt to systematize nature deeply feel. Linnæus has succeeded to admiration, in forming a system of botany and zoology; but after the student has been enabled to pass, as by Ariadne's clue, through the mazes of nature, he begins to be dissatisfied with his guide, feeling that many things in the system are but imperfectly right, and that something is decidedly wrong. Who has not been conscious of a feeling of dissatisfaction, approaching to disgust, when taught to classify the stars, according to the figures exhibited on the celestial globe? In fact, to what department of knowledge can you turn, where man is not baffled in his attempts to reduce the works of God to system? But if we, on this account, quarrel with the creation and its author, we are justly compared to a fly crawling on the dome of St. Paul's cathedral, and censuring the architect, for what a fly has not organs to comprehend.

If, then, the Scriptures do not conform to our ideas of a moral code, they are, in this, perfectly harmonious with the other productions of their author. Nature is as unlike the spruce neatness of a Dutch garden, as the Bible is unlike the code of Justinian, or of Napoleon. The difficulty of reducing the Scriptures to the order of a human system of morals, though confessedly insuperable, is a presumption, if not a positive proof, that they are not

the invention of men, but the gift of God: They have more of the character of all that is divine, than of any thing human.

But as nature, amidst apparent confusion, has certain prevalent laws, which cannot be violated with impunity; so there is a grand moral law pervading the whole volume of revelation. The moral government of God meets us in a way peculiar to himself, at the very opening of the sacred code. That God made man in his own image, which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, with dominion over the inferior creatures, is what no independent witness has testified, and what infinitely concerns us to know. Beyond this elevation of moral grandeur, to which our nature was exalted, nothing can be conceived. A mightier motive to virtue can scarcely be felt. To be made the living image of the virtue and dominion of the Deity, is the highest honour which a creature can enjoy. This powerfully prompts to live up to the high distinction; for failure would bring with it its own penalty, in an unutterable degradation.

This implies that the grand law of virtue, is, to resemble the moral governor, which also furnishes a motive as tender as it is strong; for the sovereign arbiter of our fate requires us to be nothing but what he himself is, which precludes all suspicion of arbitrary use of uncontrollable power.

But, since it would be impossible for us to grasp the whole extent of this idea, so as to know all that is included in God's image, our duty is compressed into a small space, and enacted under the form of a law. The whole moral law, under which we are placed, is expressed in one word—love. This is declared to be the substance of the two tables which God gave to Moses, on Mount Sinai, the first requiring supreme love to God, and the second commanding us to love our neighbour as ourselves. "On these two commandments, hang all the law and the

prophets." Now it must be obvious, that this is equivalent to enjoining resemblance to our Maker's moral character ; for God is love.

This law, when most severely examined, is found to contain the essence of moral rectitude. When morals are probed to the bottom, it is seen, that the essence of virtue lies in benevolence ; that the highest exercise of benevolence consists in love to that one Being who comprises in himself the great sum of all beings, and of all excellencies ; and that the secondary exercise of benevolence lies in loving fellow-beings as ourselves. The utmost refinement of moral philosophy has not been able to improve upon this. Love, or benevolence, is, in morals, what gravitation is in physics, one simple law, of indefinite application and omnipotent force.

But how can we account for the perfection of moral philosophy, in a book written ages before the science of morals was studied, and by men who seem never to have made mental, or moral subjects their scientific pursuit ? How is it that no others, even in the most learned nations, have caught the idea and fastened upon it, with the eagerness which it should excite ? Why are not Aristotle's *Ethics*, and Cicero's *Offices*, and Epictetus' *Morals*, animated with the vital spirit of the great moral principle ? Why are selfishness, or vanity, the inspiring genius of heathen virtue, which is thus degraded into a splendid vice ? Why is Socrates so far below Moses ? not to say Jesus, whom Rousseau pronounces it madness to degrade to a level with Socrates. The utmost simplicity reigns in the writings of Moses, who employs no metaphysical discussion, takes no credit to himself for the discoveries of genius, but ascribes to God the perfect law given to men. There is no fair way of avoiding the conclusion, that Moses was the mere organ of Deity, who is the great legislator of the moral as well as natural world, from whom, as the fountain of virtue, all just principles flow.

It would be easy to follow out this general law through all its specific enactments, and to shew that the whole moral system of Revelation proves its origin to be divine. But the intended Lecture on eternal rewards and punishments, will necessarily recall to view the subject of moral government; and another on Predestination, or the counsel of God for the government of the world, will require the consideration of what may be called the moral providence of God. I shall close, then, by appealing to the judgment and conscience of every sincere inquirer after truth, whether we can rationally suppose, that the only book which has revealed the true theory of morals, is an imposture. The sacred writers declare that they received from God the law which we have seen to be holy, just, and good, and if God were not its author, they have practised upon us an infamous cheat. The same fountain sends not forth sweet water and brackish; and the same men would not at once benefit us by the purest moral code, and impose upon us by the foulest cheat. The Koran of Mahomed, and the Shasters of the Hindoos, betray their imposture by their impurity: the Bible proves its sincerity by its sanctity; for to suspect it of imposture, we must suppose that the worst causes produce the best effects.

II. The information which the Scriptures give, concerning *man*, affords proof of their divine origin.

“Know thyself,” was deemed an injunction so sage and important as to be worthy to be written, in letters of gold, on the doors of an ancient temple. A modern poet has clothed it with the charms of verse, “man’s greatest knowledge is himself to know.” But, though we maintain that *God* is the great object of science; we must admit that, next to our Maker, nothing can be more important to us than to know ourselves. With this, the sacred writings accord; for they say to us, “examine yourselves, prove your own selves? What! know you not your own selves?”

Now, where can we learn what we need to know concerning ourselves, but in the Scriptures? By their aid, we can trace our race up to its origin, know its primitive character, learn the spring of its present vices and calamities, and discover the source of our hopes, more important to us, than the springs of the Nile.

1. The Scriptures alone give an authentic history of the creation of man, and of all things else. To a powerful mind, as well as to a devotional heart, nothing can be more interesting than the history of creation. Among objects of mere curiosity, it stands preeminent. But what can be so deeply absorbing to those who know they are creatures, and accountable to a higher power, as to know who created them, and what is the true perfection of their nature, and its original destination? Indifference to these questions, would argue a stupidity that is worse than brutal, implying moral turpitude, as well as mental degradation. But where shall we satisfy the curiosity that is justified by every powerful consideration? Nowhere, but in the Jewish Scriptures, or, which is the same thing, in writings which have borrowed from this divine source.

Take the most ancient and cultivated of merely heathen nations, and read its Cosmogony. The following is that of the Chinese, which is so ludicrous, that I feel disposed to apologize for introducing it into a Christian pulpit, by reminding you how boldly the Chinese have been set off against the Jews.

“ When the time came that the Yin and the Yang combined, and the five elements intermingled in the centre of the universe, where moisture and heat operated on each other, a man was produced. This man was by nature intelligent. As he gazed upon the heavens, he saw, darting from a star, a golden ball of light. On approaching it he found it to be an animated being, which he supposed was

of the same species with himself. The being addressed him, saying, 'The wings have long embraced you. On the breaking forth of the fructifying principle, I knew that you had entered into the world.' Then plucking up certain plants, he formed a garment for the lower parts of the body. He named the man Hwang Laou, and informed him of the manner of creation, of the division of the heavens and the earth, the Yin and the Yang, the separating of the darkness from the light, &c., that all things were produced from an egg first formed in the water; that there were four other human beings formed, one at each of the four points of the compass. Having said this, the being disappeared, and the four persons flew to the spot, each from a different quarter. These five persons obtained, by a chemical process from an immense crucible, a male being and also a female, the latter of whom was called Shai neu, serpent woman. These, obtaining essential influence from the sun and moon, produced other human beings, who again united and filled the earth with people."

This is the account of the origin of all things, and especially of man, given in the literature of the Chinese, who are vaunted by infidels as of far higher antiquity than the Scriptures assign to creation. But the heavenly bodies are the best records of chronology, and it is said, that a celebrated astronomer, observing that a certain eclipse was described as occurring in the days of the founder of the Chinese empire, calculated backward, and found that this eclipse happened in the days of the grandson of Noah. And who does not see that the Chinese have mixed up the history of the creation and the deluge, to make one ludicrous fable? The egg formed out of the water, may be supposed to refer to the waters covering the earth at creation; but the second father of our race and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, are evidently the origin



of the four who were at the four quarters of the globe.

The serpent woman, is manifestly derived from the Mosaic account of the fall, and even the very name Shai, reminds a Hebrew scholar of the name Isha, which Adam gave to our common mother. In short, all that bears any resemblance to a record of facts, is obviously derived from Scripture; and as to the formation of living beings, in a crucible, by a chemical process, we may give the Chinese the credit of that original thought.

The Cosmogony of the Greeks is little more rational, and where we find, among merely human writings any thing less absurd, it is manifestly stolen. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, will naturally occur to the classical scholar, as giving a more natural account of all things. But who can compare the first book of that fanciful work with the commencement of the Bible, and not see that the Roman poet has torn a leaf out of the Hebrew code? That Moses was the more ancient of the two is well known, and as his writings were translated into Greek, which was much studied at Rome, in Ovid's time, it is obvious that he had the means of becoming acquainted with the genuine original history of the creation.

If, then, we deny the divine origin of the Scriptures, and ascribe them to imposture, we must conclude that we are left without any account of the creation of ourselves and all things. For as the world must have been created first, that there might be a place for man to stand upon, how could we know what was done before man was in existence, except by revelation? And how could we know even the history of our own creation, but by the testimony of our Creator? If we have not this in the Bible, we have it nowhere. I have shewn, in the fourth Lecture on the external evidences of revelation, how improbable it is, that a wise and benevolent Being would produce such a creature as



man, and never inform him who made him. This improbability is immensely heightened, by the consideration that man was evidently formed for moral government, which requires that he should know the governor and his laws.

The modern science of geology frequently leads the mind, from the history of the creation to that of the flood; for some of the geological phenomena are to be assigned to one of these events, and some to the other. The Scriptures, however, are the only source of information concerning either. But when Moses wrote, geology was not known. Yet those who are most skilled in the modern science, are satisfied that all its discoveries confirm the Mosaic records of the creation and the deluge. This is a singular coincidence. How can we account for it, but upon the supposition that the sacred historian was guided by the Almighty Being who first created the world, and then, submerged it beneath the flood? A watchmaker's child, who has no share in his father's mechanical skill, may, by converse with him, learn to talk correctly of the construction of a watch; and Moses, by information from the author of the creation and the deluge, has been enabled to write accurately of both, though he lived ages before the science of geology was known, or even thought of.

The account which Scripture gives of the formation of the two sexes, is such as must satisfy every candid and discerning mind. That our whole race was formed originally from the dust of the earth, is rendered probable by what we know to be a fact—that our bodies turn to dust again. This, which the Bible declares to be the execution of the penalty pronounced on sin, “dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,” has not escaped the notice of the poets, who are the keen observers of human nature, and who have said, “*Pulvis et umbra sumus*: we are but dust and shadow,”

The Scriptural account of the formation of woman is, I am aware, a perpetual jest with infidels. But jokes are so far from necessarily implying arguments, that they frequently are resorted to for want of argument. Who can doubt, that man and woman are related? Where is the man of reflecting and generous mind, who does not willingly admit that woman is his sister? And does not the woman's feebleness require that she should enjoy the solace of knowing that man is her brother? But how could the first man and woman have been related, except in some such way as the Scriptures point out? If the mother of us all had been formed from the dust, just as our first father was, the original pair would have had no more relation to each other than to the brutes, who were equally formed from the earth. Yet it was obviously desirable, that the first female should be commended to the love and protection of the man, by some peculiar tie. And what so appropriate and efficient as that of having been formed from himself, so that he should say, "this is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh"? As to the probability of the woman being made out of man, this was certainly as easy to the Creator as the formation of man out of the dust, or the production of woman in any other mode that could be conceived. The Scriptures always refer to this history of the origin of the sexes, as laying the foundation for marriage, and furnishing the reason for the union of *one* man with *one* woman, in opposition to polygamy. By denying the divine origin and authority of this record, we are left destitute of a law and sanction for marriage, society's most vital bond. Can any sincere Deist, believing the existence and moral attributes of a Creator, suppose that he has left us thus destitute of what we most need? Can any rational man believe that we are indebted to imposture and a lie, for that grand

law of marriage by which adulterous lust was driven from men

“ Among the bestial herd to range; by which,  
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,  
Relations dear, and all the charities  
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.”

The declaration of Scripture, that God made man upright, perfect in his Maker's image, accords with right reason, and universal tradition. Who could suppose that an unclean thing could come originally from the holy hands of the moral Governor? Or, that he who forbids sin, and threatens to punish it, should have formed man, from the first, with a disposition to commit it? If he placed man in a state of probation, *that* was evidently the very thing for which he is, by his distinguishing faculties, adapted, and was therefore an arrangement worthy of the Creator, and in fact demanded by consistency with his own previous conduct. Probation, however, implies the possibility of failure, and lays its blame on the creature.

That the original state of man was that of innocence and happiness, is the language of universal tradition. The golden age was not the mere dream of the poets, but the relics of a veritable history; and though speculative philosophers have not merely supposed man to have been originally a savage, but to have gone on all-fours; sound reason spurns the notion, as absurd, and contrary to evidence. If man had ever been in that state, he never would have emerged from it. The tendency of man is to degenerate, but by his own unaided efforts, he will never rise. I am aware, that this is a position which will be disputed; but I am sure that it will endure examination. Look at the savages in the islands of the Pacific, and say whether they have not degenerated, and whether they have not been in their degraded state long enough to render their spontaneous recovery hopeless? Look at those nations

which have risen from barbarism to civilization, from ignorance to knowledge, and say whether it has not been invariably by aids derived from some more favoured people. The elevation of our country from its savage state, was the effect of the invasion and conquest of our isle by the Romans, who, in their turn again, were indebted to the Greeks, for science, knowledge, and literature, as well as to the Asiatics, for elegant luxuries. The Crusaders imported, from the East, those improvements which roused Europe from the barbarism of the dark ages; and the fall of Constantinople prepared the way for the Reformation, by sending the fugitive Greeks through Europe, which acquired, with their language, the knowledge and the taste which Greece enjoyed. Though the Greeks themselves affected to be the originators of science and literature, as the aristocracy of Athens wore golden grasshoppers in their hair, to indicate that the men and the insects were alike *αὐτόχθονες*, aborigines, natives of the soil; the Orientals always said, you Greeks have nothing but what you borrowed from us. Greece, in fact, confessed that she received letters from the East, which was universally acknowledged to be the cradle of literature, science, and arts. Thus we are conducted to the original site of our race, which, according to the Scripture, commenced its career in Eden in a state of knowledge, purity, and bliss. In short, every strict and impartial inquiry ends in proving that the Scriptures are not fable and imposture, but divinely inspired truth.

2. The revealed doctrine of the fall of our race proves the Bible true.

That some great moral convulsion has happened to mankind, we cannot rationally doubt. We have seen the reasonableness of the Scripture doctrine of the original rectitude of our race, and the absurdity of supposing that God would make creatures displeasing to him and alienated from him; but even

Deists themselves own that man is now far enough from being all that the strictest virtue requires. If we look at the physical world, we see order and harmony, worthy of the great Creator; but when we turn to the moral world, and especially to the mind of man, where we might expect the clearest impress of the Creator's moral image, we find darkness, disorder, misery, and vice. Might we not suspect, then, that some fatal catastrophe had befallen this part of creation?

The poets tell us that the golden age was followed by one of silver, and *that*, again, by the present iron age. But if a change for the worse has taken place, at some time, in some way, where have we the narrative of that most melancholy, yet most interesting event, except in the Bible? Is it probable that our moral Governor would leave us utterly without the record of an affair which so deeply concerns us? What more probable account can be conceived than that which Scripture has given?

I am not unaware, however, that infidels make the story of the fall the butt of their ridicule. But we are prepared to meet them, and discuss the question in fair argument. It is ridiculously absurd, the infidel exclaims, to suppose that man should have fallen and ruined all his race, by eating an apple. But it is very easy to describe the most horrid crime in such terms as shall make it appear a trifle. A convicted murderer may exclaim, "It is horrid injustice and cruelty, to hang me for turning the current of a few ounces of blood." But the judge may retort, "Not at all unjust, or cruel, it is only making a rope press tightly against your throat."

With regard to the apple, as the infidel loves to call it, we ask, Whether a state of probation does not require some test of obedience? If this be conceded, as in all reason it must, we ask again, whether any better test can be devised than setting apart one of the trees of Paradise, that man's abstinence from

this, may prove his entire deference to his Maker's will. When infidels insinuate that it was a trifling fault, to eat an apple; they seem not to be aware that they are handling a two-edged sword; for surely it may be said in reply, "Then it was a small thing for Adam to abstain from, in compliance with his Maker's will."—What cause

"Moved our grand parents, in that happy state,  
Favoured of heaven so highly, to fall off  
From their Creator, and transgress his will  
For *one* restraint, lords of the world besides?"

That no other test was so natural, and suitable, and probable, as that which the Scriptures mention, will appear to any one who attempts to devise another. And no one should find fault with this, till he can point out a better.

What the Scriptures say, that the woman was first in the transgression, accords with existing facts; for who suffers most severely the consequences of the fall, the man or the woman? The subjection of the female and the sorrows of child-bearing, are, in Scripture, declared to be the punishment of her peculiar share in the fall; and what part of the creation suffers, in this way, like woman?

That the whole race bleeds for the first parents' sin, should be considered, not merely as a doctrine of Scripture, but as a matter of fact. That children do suffer by their parents' faults is undeniable; and it is difficult to conceive how it could have been otherwise. Suppose our fallen parents to have had sinless children, would it not have been contrary to the general law of nature, which is, that like should beget like? Would not the sinless offspring of sinful parents have been placed in strange, anomalous, and improper circumstances? Thus, if we turn from the consideration of original sin, as a doctrine of Scripture, to treat it merely as a matter of fact, we soon clear the Bible of the charges of absurdity, which infidels have flung upon it. For if any one,



struck with the proofs of depravity, which meet us on every hand, asks, whence arises the wickedness of this generation? he may be told that we inherit it from our fathers; for they were a similar race. The same question applied to *them* would receive a similar answer, and thus we may go back to the first pair; but as they had no ancestors, the same answer cannot be given here. If however, we ask, whether they were *created* wicked; reason, as well as Scripture, will say, no. Then they fell by their own transgression, and thus transmitted vice to their posterity. Here we have the doctrine of Scripture, elicited by a rational deduction of facts. Yet, on no point has the Bible been exposed to more envenomed opposition, than on this one doctrine of the fall. From the severest ordeal, however, the Scripture comes forth, with unsullied honour.

“But the story of the serpent has been shunned,” a Deist will exclaim. Well, we will now meet it. The Scriptures declare that the agent of the temptation was an evil spirit, a being that had himself fallen. Now we all know too well, that those who have fallen into sin themselves, are sure to endeavour to drag others down to their own level. That other beings may have fallen, *we* have no reason to think improbable; and as one *human* mind can have an influence on another, why may not a spirit of another order have access to our spirits?

But the spirit, as the *agent*, has not been so fiercely assailed, as the serpent, which is considered the *instrument* employed. A celebrated Christian divine, Vitranga, thinks that no literal serpent is introduced by Moses, but that the evil spirit is, by a bold figure, called a serpent, as we know he is in the New Testament, where we read of “the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan.” But whatever we may say of this solution, we may be sure that he who is satisfied on all other points, will not long stumble at this objection.



Again, however, we say, let those who are dissatisfied with this history of our fall, find us a better. For we must still contend, that the affair is too deeply interesting to us, to suffer us to rest contented without any knowledge. "Whence cometh evil," has been a distracting inquiry among philosophers, who have said, if there are gods, whence cometh evil? if there are not, whence cometh good? Moses professes to solve these doubts. The unrivalled sublimity of his writings shews that he could well appreciate the difficulties which others find in his narrative; but he never stops to argue the case, contenting himself with simply stating it, as from unquestionable authority. He lived long enough after the fall, to require information from a higher source, and to the God who spake by him he refers as his informant. Reasons enough are to be found in favour of the chief facts in the narrative of the fall; and if some remain with which we are unsatisfied, this is but what we can say of many things in nature and providence, which yet we cannot deny. But, to proceed.

3. The revealed account of the recovery of our race, and the origin of its immortal hopes, affords evidence of the divinity of the Scriptures.

The doctrine of redemption by some great friendly personage, is to be distinctly examined in a future lecture. Here, however, I may observe that this is so unlike all human inventions, that we cannot avoid suspecting that its origin *may* be divine. Of this, there is one evidence which demands peculiar notice. It is well known that the volume of revelation is divided into two parts, called the Old Testament and the New. The *promise* of redemption is contained in the first, the *fulfilment* in the second. The former volume is in the hands of a people who do not believe the latter. The Jews, therefore, are an undeniable proof that the original story of redemption was not forged by Christians, to give an air of divinity to their Scriptures; and the Jews' rejection

of the New Testament shews that this was not forged by themselves, to shew that their Scriptures have been fulfilled. *They* possess the lock, of curious and intricate wards, *we* hold the only key that will open it. The New Testament is an unmeaning book, without the Old, which is essential to the understanding and verification of its contents; just as a key is a useless thing, without a lock. The Old Testament is, without the New, like a lock without a key to open it. The Scriptures of the Jews contain a grand promise of an event that was to happen to them, in a time which is long past, and in a country from which they are now driven; but the Christian Scriptures shew that the promise, though most peculiar and complicated, has been fulfilled to the letter.

Christians have not made the lock, by forging the prophecies of the great deliverer; for these are in the hands of the Jews, who can bear witness that they expected a Messiah, ages before the Christian religion existed, and in fact, they expect one still. The Jews have not made the key, by forging the story of Christ, to represent their own Scriptures as fulfilled; for they do not admit ours as the true key, though we can shew that it exactly fits the wards. But they look for another, admitting indeed that the time is past for the coming of the Messiah, but asserting that his coming is deferred, on account of their sins. We say, would the time have been so accurately and positively foretold, if the season were to depend on their good behaviour? Any one can take the lock and examine its intricate wards, by investigating the prophecies concerning Christ; and any one may take the key, and see whether it fits, by the New Testament containing an exact fulfilment of the Old. That Christians are not the manufacturers of the lock is proved by the testimony of unwilling, and therefore unsuspected, witnesses—the Jews. But it may be said, *we* have manufactured the key. To this, we reply: No. The key

is, strictly speaking, the events, rather than the New Testament which records them. And we did not make the events. The Jews, who reject our Scriptures, own the leading facts; that there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, and that he wrought miracles, and that they crucified him. These events, we contend, furnish the only key to unlock the mysteries of the Old Testament, proving the fulfilment of the grand prophecies, at the appointed time, which has passed, ages since.

Now, here is a mysterious coincidence, which it is beyond the power of mortals to have contrived, and which furnishes a proof of sincerity and divinity, utterly incompatible with the supposition of imposture. Has any man a right to reject revelation, till he can find an answer to this argument for its truth? Can he justify himself, at the bar of his own reason and conscience, for wishing us to abandon a revelation, which presents such evidences of truth as are beyond all human contrivance, and prove that an infinite mind, capable of controuling all events, has furnished it with evidences that take us by surprise and carry captive every candid mind?

Let it be remembered too, that revelation alone pretends to discover any method of redemption, which, however, we know, or ought to know, that we absolutely need.

I had intended to show how the worship which the Scriptures enjoin proves their divinity. For, while other religions attach value to mere rites, Scripture teaches that these are of no other use than to guide and excite the adoration of the heart. This surely is the language, not of impious imposture, but of piety and truth.

III. The influence of Divine Revelation on those who believe it, furnishes another proof of its veracity.

Usefulness is the test of truth. This is as sure as any chemical test which can be applied to discover the nature of physical substances. No alkali can

be better proved, by changing vegetable colours, than truth can be known by its tendency to do good ; while opposing errors will be productive of corresponding mischief. Examine this to the utmost, and the more deeply you search, the more completely will you be satisfied of the soundness of the position. Let a person adopt the false notion that fire will not burn : let him act upon it, and what mischiefs will follow ! showing that the opposite truth has been a source of many benefits, by guarding us from innumerable evils. Examine the influence of Divine revelation, compared with any other system which men can adopt. At the influence of scepticism, deism, and atheism, we have already glanced, in the challenge which we threw out to infidels to produce their own system, that its evidences and effects might be examined.

Consider, now, the effect which Divine Revelation, when believed, has on our peace.

Where the Bible is not believed, it can, of course, produce no effect, as the most valuable and powerful medicine cannot cure the diseases of those who refuse to take it ; but that the Bible is a source of peace, to those who receive it as Divine, may be abundantly proved. We have seen that man, bereft of revelation, is abandoned to the most distracting uncertainty ; so that nothing but a brutal stupidity can save an infidel from a life of torment. With an indifference that is unworthy of a rational creature, we do not attempt to argue ; we address ourselves to those who feel and act like men ; and we assert that the tormenting uncertainty, to which infidelity abandons us, is removed by the revelation of Scripture. Here we find what we burned to know ; and when we receive it, as the testimony of heaven, it soothes the mind to rest. This can be proved, not only by the records of history, concerning believers in all ages, but by the testimony of ten thousand living witnesses. Men whose consciences

were tormented with an oppressive sense of the Divine displeasure, and with fearful forebodings concerning an everlasting futurity, have discovered the provision made for their forgiveness and happiness, have believed it, and felt "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." They were before wretched, and they can show you that it was not without reason; they are now happy, and for this they can assign a sufficient cause. But the repose and felicity of his creatures may surely be considered as a just object of the Creator's solicitude, and a sufficient reason for revealing himself and his methods of mercy to a fallen world. This we find in the Bible, and nowhere else.

But the peaceful influence of revelation is derived chiefly from the discovery of Christ, who is called our peace, who made peace by the blood of his cross; for the chastisement that procures our peace was laid upon him. The discovery of a satisfaction for our offences, and a method of reconciling the claims of the moral Governor, with the safety of a sinner, is an affair of the last importance to man, who is known, by the confession of conscience, not to be all that he ought to be. If, therefore, the wide world can present to us no source of peace, except that which we find in the Bible, and this is found adequate to all our necessities, is not revelation proved true, by this internal mark, if usefulness is a test of truth?

The effect of revelation, in producing virtue, piety or holiness, is another evidence of its truth. Even sceptical writers have owned the influence of the Bible on the mind. Rousseau exclaims, "the holiness of the gospel speaks to my heart." This is, in fact, the predominant reason why the Bible is hated by those who are determined to indulge their passions, and take this world for their portion, at any rate. To them the Bible is the great disturber,

and they hate it, as robbers hate magistrates and laws. This argument I will put two ways, as philosophers elicit truth by the opposite methods of analysis and synthesis. You shall produce me a man, of whom I know nothing. But you shall assure me, by sufficient evidence, that he is devoted to the study of revelation. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night. He is scrupulous to draw all his sentiments from this source, to regulate all his tempers by this rule, to derive his happiness from its promises, to consecrate his life to accomplish the ends at which it aims, and to prove his obedience to this revelation, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts according to the gospel." Now, without knowing any thing of the man, I will venture to describe his temper, character, and conduct—they are such as to show that this book proves itself divine, by its influence, its adaptation to usefulness, its effects in making man all that he ought to be, subduing his passions, moulding his character according to the true model of virtue, rendering him a blessing to his fellow creatures, and an object of complacency to his God.

Take another, who is equally unknown to me, but you shall shew me his life, without saying any thing about his sentiments with regard to revelation. If you can prove to me, that he is grave, thoughtful, serious, candid, humble, patient, meek, amiable, self-denied, benevolent, industrious, useful, devoted to the interests of his fellow-creatures, and anxious that every thought and affection shall be acceptable to the eye of omniscience; I will then venture to affirm, that he is a student of the Sacred Scriptures, believing them to be a revelation from God.

In fact, we need only compare the real, thorough-paced men, of either party, leaving out the mass of those who would be called neutrals, and who can



prove nothing in any question, and we shall see, at once, that the effects of a belief in revelation prove it divine; while the consequences of rejection of the Bible shew that Deism is a pernicious error. But, after having examined this question upon individuals, let us try the Bible by its effects upon masses. There are few countries where a belief in divine revelation is so general as to admit of a full and fair application of this test: but we may make some approximation to the truth. Take the British empire for example. In England, Ireland, and Scotland, ignorance, or knowledge, of revelation prevails in three different degrees. In Scotland, there is most scriptural knowledge. In Ireland, there is least. England stands as the medium. Look, now, at Ireland, where ignorance of the Bible reigns, and see what is its moral condition. What crimes and miseries have afflicted that country! Look at Scotland, and see what order, virtue, and comfort are found in the country where the Bible is best known. Even Ireland, in the north, where the Scriptures are better known, makes some approach to the virtue and comfort of Scotland. Now look at England, which is neither so ignorant of the Bible as Ireland, nor so well acquainted with it as Scotland; and you will perceive that we hold a middle place between the wretched vicious pauperism of Ireland, and the sobriety, order, and comfort of Scotland. Let us make another trial, on a grand scale. Nothing puts the human character to so severe a test as a political revolution. This is the time when men act out all that is in their hearts. America and France have both made the hazardous experiment of forming a new government, and establishing a republic on the ruins of monarchy. In America, the experiment has succeeded. In France, it dreadfully failed. Why? The Americans were a people acquainted with the Scriptures, and to a considerable degree, under their



influence. France was, to a great extent, a nation of infidels. The bloody reign of terror was the triumph of infidelity.

But I am aware that there were circumstances in both countries which make this trial somewhat equivocal. Let us turn then to an example which may be more decisive—those islands which have lately been brought from an utter destitution of revealed light to the complete triumphs of revelation. Savage cannibals will scarcely be claimed by the infidel as fine specimens of infidelity, but he must not wonder, if we love to point to them as proofs of the happy change which revealed religion has produced. It is impossible that infidelity should ever achieve such triumphs. For no nation that has once been under the full influence of the Scriptures, is so degraded as those were who have been elevated, from barbarism to civilization, by the influence of the Scriptures. Those people who are already most exalted in the scale of being owe it to the Bible, and they are so advanced in the march of intellect and improvement, that no bounds can be set to their future prospects. It can be easily shown that the grand improvements of society are the fruits of Christianity. The abolition of infanticide and polygamy; the amelioration of the horrors of war, with the increasing conviction of the unlawfulness of that favourite game of nations; and the efforts to abolish slavery, (which once afflicted, not Africa alone, but all nations,) are the effects of the Bible, which teaches that God “made of one blood all nations dwelling on the face of the earth.” Infidels shew how little philanthropy their system inspires, and how little confidence they feel in its beneficial influence, by carefully abstaining from all attempts to convert savages.

As long, then, as usefulness remains the test of truth, the effects of the Bible pour condemnation on all those who reject it as a wicked imposture.

IV. The utter failure of all attempts to prove the Bible false, leaves us in full possession of the right to believe it true.

Infidels love to talk as if lies and imposture were the easiest things in the world. The opposite is the fact. Truth is easy, falsehood difficult. If a man wishes to take the easiest course through life, let him adopt the path of truth, simplicity, and candour. He will then, seldom be entangled in difficulties. But let him pursue the opposite course of insincerity, falsehood, deceit, and imposture; and he will soon find himself involved in snares; and, if, to extricate himself, he recur to fresh tricks, he will find, that instead of relief from former difficulties, he has but procured to himself new ones.

In every attempt at imposture, there is sure to be found some failure which exposes its author to shame; especially, in every great affair, where many are concerned, both as the actors and the dupes, there will always be found the means of detection and exposure. Look around the world, and see, if you can find any exception to this rule. Gamaliel well said of Christianity, "if this work be of God, you cannot overthrow it: but if it be of men, it will come to nought."

If the Bible were an imposture, it would be no petty one. It is on a grand scale, including many agents, and involving the interests of a world. It would be strange, indeed, if imposture had worked here, all these ages, undetected.

Infidels plead, that men have not been allowed to shew the falsehood of the Scriptures. But they must be shamefully ignorant, if they know not, that, for three hundred years, the Christian religion was exposed to the severest opposition, from the philosophers and literati of the most cultivated nations of the earth. In modern times, the same liberty to examine and expose revelation has been restored.

America, there are no laws to prevent infidels

from doing their worst. One of their number was President of the United States. France has long presented an open field to infidelity. Nor is there any real, efficient restraint on free inquiry, in our own land. Every man is as free to reject as to adopt the Bible.

And what have modern infidels done? Nothing. Paine has but picked up the shafts of former Deists, which had fallen to the ground, and hurled them again with a feebler hand. How is this? The human mind is active, science has advanced, literature prodigiously increased, and novelty in every line has been exhibited. Why have not men been able to advance one step beyond the Scriptures? Here we are, in 1831, just where the Scriptures left us, eighteen centuries ago; without any information on all the grandest questions, beyond that which the Bible furnished in a remote age.

Of all books, there is none so open to detection as the Bible. It seems as if it had been written with this express design. It would be easy to compose a book of falsehoods, much more artfully. Witness the Koran, of which the rhapsodical style sets you at defiance to fasten upon any thing. Yet the imposture is manifest.

But the Bible is large, its parts are numerous, its subjects and its style various. The writers lived in different ages, as well as countries, and could have had no concert with each other, to manage an imposture, and give it a fair show of truth. One part of Scripture was written two thousand years before the other. One portion of the Bible is history, another poetry, a third prophecy, a fourth letters.

If the Book were not true, and divine, it is scarcely possible that it should escape detection. If a forged history of a man were published first, and then a forged volume of letters purporting to be his, alluding to familiar events, contending with adversaries, and acknowledging the favours of friends, would not the means of detection be furnished?

Paley has applied this test to Christianity, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, where he shews, that a comparison of Paul's fourteen letters, with the Acts of the Apostles, proves the veracity of both.

In courts of judicature, the utmost attention is paid to the laws of evidence; for on these depend the safety, not only of property, but even of life. But the most eminent legal men, who are more skilled in this department of knowledge than others can be, have examined the sacred writers, with a scrutinizing eye, and have declared themselves satisfied with the evidence of their truth. Judge Hale, who was one of the best of lawyers, as well as best of men, made the Scriptures his study and his guide. Sir William Jones, who united to the professional science of a lawyer, an unparalleled acquaintance with general literature, pronounced a eulogium on the Scriptures, which is too generally known to need to be repeated. The evidences of imposture, which infidels have pretended to discover in the Bible, have been sufficiently answered, and it is well known that historic doubts of the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte have been published, with so much plausibility, as to demonstrate that there is nothing, however certain, that may not be called in question, with some show of reason.

In fine, the utmost research can discover nothing in the Scriptures that can justify unbelief. It remains, therefore, what the Bible pronounces it, a convicted crime. Flee from it, as from the face of a serpent. For as its cause is guilty, its effects are pernicious. By this, we are cut off from all the benefits which revelation alone can confer, from pardon, from peace, from purity, from usefulness, from the image of God here, and the eternal enjoyment of him in the world to come.

We have now glanced rapidly over the whole field of internal evidence, which the volume of Revelation presents. We have seen, that, on every subject of vital importance, it presents information

most satisfactory to the mind, most authoritative to the conscience, and most interesting to the heart. Concerning the first and best of Beings, on whom our present and eternal all depends, it affords us information which we can derive no where else. His nature and his attributes, are discovered with the clearness of light, and brought home to the heart with the force of thunder. What philosophers, with their most profound research, could not elicit, the Scriptures assert with the simplicity and the majesty of authoritative communications from the fountain of truth. Every one, therefore, who sincerely believes a God, must fasten upon these communications from him, with an eager welcome which no other communications can excite. Concerning the creation of all things, and especially of that being in whom we are most deeply interested—man, the Bible gives such information, as nations, unfavoured with this heavenly light, have sought in vain. We see the creation spring up at the *fiat* of the Almighty; the first parents of our race, moulded by his plastic hand; and by discovering the character impressed upon them at their creation, we learn what constitutes the freshness of their original beauty, and the essence of their primeval bliss. If, while we contemplate this picture, the delight which it inspires vanishes, as we see their paradise lost; our pleasure returns, as hope springs up in the promise of a great deliverer for our race.

The Redeemer, we have seen painted to the life, by the pencil of prophecy, and the prediction deposited in the hands of a people, who, unhappily, did not welcome him for whom they professed to wait, as the hope of Israel. Yet these depositaries of the prophecies, are the monuments of their fulfilment; for they had previously declared, that when Christ should appear, this people should see “neither form nor comeliness in him, why they should desire him.” But, “what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God

of no effect ? The election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded." But, by this means, while the prophecies are in the hands of one people, the proofs of the fulfilment are deposited with another. The hostility between these two, is a security against collusion, and a proof that the hand of God was in this, affording an evidence of veracity, which no human skill could contrive, and no mortal power accomplish.

The effects of Revelation, on those who believe it, have been shewn to be such as to prove it divine. All that a discovery of designs of mercy can do upon the troubled conscience, to soothe it to peace, we have seen to flow from the Revelation of Christ ; and all that a communication from the fountain of virtue, might be expected to accomplish, in restoring the heart to allegiance and conformity to God, we have found to result from the religion of Jesus.

Nor can the keenest intellect, urged on by the most hostile mind, detect, in the Bible, the traces of imposture, which never fails to betray itself. For though infidels have frequently boasted of their discovery of fraud in the Sacred Volume, we have found that, on the one hand, contradictions have been supposed to be found in narratives which we know to be true ; and on the other, satisfactory answers have been furnished to meet the most argumentative objections of Deists.

Let those who profess to believe the divine book, prove their faith by their works, by making the Sacred Scriptures their daily study, their guide, and their delight. Thus you will become daily more satisfied of its truth yourselves, and will afford increasing evidence to others, that it is able to make men wise to salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

## LECTURE II.

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### PREDESTINATION,

OR THE

### COUNSEL OF GOD FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

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EPHESIANS i. 11.

*“ In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”*

AMONG the numerous attacks made on revelation, it is not surprising that infidels should fasten on predestination, and contend that a book which contains such a doctrine, cannot come from God. Christians themselves are not agreed on this profound subject, and I do not intend to interfere with their disputes; but as far as this doctrine is generally admitted to be contained in Scripture, I am prepared to defend it.

#### I. The statement of the doctrine.

It is here taken for granted, that the world is the production of an infinitely wise and holy, as well as mighty, being. For the objector says that such a doctrine as predestination cannot come from such a being as God, and therefore the Scriptures which contain the doctrine cannot be a revelation from God. We must not then call in question the existence and attributes of Deity, in the course of this investigation; but consider both parties well agreed here.



Those who object to divine revelation on account of the tenet of predestination, say, "this doctrine asserts that all things are fixed by an eternal unalterable decree; that every man's fate was determined before he was born, so that nothing which he can do will alter it: if he was predestinated to life, let him commit whatever wickedness he may, he cannot be lost; and if appointed to death, do whatever good he may, he cannot be saved. This cannot be true, and therefore the book which asserts it must be false."

This, however, is so far from being a clear and fair statement of the genuine doctrine of Scripture, that it is a heterogeneous compound of falsehood and truth. It has just enough of truth in it to conceal the error, and enough of error to neutralize the truth.

The true statement of the doctrine of Scripture, we contend, is the following. This world, as it was not the work of chance, is not left to chance, but is under the superintendence of him who made it, and who governs it by infinite uncontrollable power, according to a plan which he had formed before he created all things. This plan being the production of his own attributes, for the moral as well as physical government of a world which contains accountable creatures, included nothing which is contrary to any perfection of Deity, or to the rational nature, and moral accountability of man.

But Deists, and indeed all sceptical persons, who are really Deists, inasmuch as they do not believe divine revelation, invariably take the false statement for the true. If we say to them, you see the Bible does address men as rational accountable creatures, urging them with arguments and motives, as if they had a control over their conduct, the reply is, this only shews that the Bible contradicts itself, and thus affords an additional evidence that the book was not given by God.

It is observable, however, that many of these objectors embrace the notion that man is not accountable for his belief, and, if not for his belief, he is accountable for nothing, since all his conduct springs from his belief. These persons therefore, contradict themselves, when they condemn the Bible for teaching the doctrine of predestination, because this is supposed to deprive man of the freedom which is essential to his accountability.

Some Christians attempt to meet the objections of infidels, by saying, that it is a mistake to suppose the Bible contains the doctrine of a predestination. This class of believers maintain that revelation has been loaded by Calvin with a burden that does not belong to the Bible, and for which *he* alone is answerable.

An acute Deist, however, thus replies: "It is unquestionable that the word predestination occurs in the Bible, and that the English translation fairly expresses the idea conveyed by the Greek original. Why is this term employed, if the doctrine is not intended to be taught? for it is evidently not the language of objectors, but of the apostles of Christ. Who can mistake the meaning of such passages as the following? 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.'—Romans viii. 29, 30. Besides, a large portion of the Scriptures evidently imply predestination. What are the prophecies but a discovery of a plan according to which events are governed? How can events be certainly foreseen, and positively foretold, if they do not occur according to a preconcerted scheme? If you reduce the prophecies to a mere probable guess, what becomes of the boasted evidence of divine revelation? If they

are really prophecies, infallibly certain, they imply a certainty of future events, and involve all the consequences of predestination. For a large part of the predictions of Scripture, respect the actions, words, tempers, thoughts, and motives of moral agents, and if these are certain before they occur, there must be a plan equivalent to what is termed predestination. Many of the things predicted refer to enemies, who are to be unconscious and unwilling agents in accomplishing future events, and Christians are fond enough of shewing how the wrath of men is made to praise God. Thus we read that the crucifixion of Christ is charged upon the Jews in the following terms : ‘ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.’—Acts ii. 23. And who can deny that the 22nd Psalm, and the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, describe the crucifixion of Christ, in terms almost as clear as those employed by the evangelists? Yet the actors in that tragedy were enemies to Jesus, and some of them utterly ignorant of the Scriptures, which they were fulfilling. If, then, this transaction which is said to involve the deepest moral turpitude has been clearly foretold, why may not the whole course of human affairs be included in a preconceived plan?”

To this argumentation I reply by admitting that the Scriptures do teach that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. I proceed then to defend this doctrine of revelation.

II. The defence of the doctrine of a divine counsel for the government of the world, may be divided into two parts, which may be called the *right* and the *fact*; or we may shew that it is fit there should be such a plan for the government of the world, and that there *is* such a plan according to which all things occur.

1. The right.

Is the counsel of God, as the apostle calls it, or

predestination, as it is usually termed, a good or an evil? Would the world be better without it? Or is it better under such a fixed plan? For though the objectors proceed on the supposition that predestination is to be dreaded as an evil, and shunned as an error; this is a mere assumption, that should by no means preclude examination.

There are, then, but two theories that can be formed.

The world must either be governed by a fixed plan, such as has obtained the name of predestination; or it must be left to proceed without a plan, or, as is usually said, it must be left to chance, or accident. If any suppose that there is a third hypothesis, a middle way, I shall in the sequel shew that this is a mistake.

Is it best that the world should be ruled, and that all events should occur, according to a fixed plan, or design in the divine mind, such as is included in the idea of predestination?

Suppose yourselves, for a moment, at the period when God was about to exert his attributes in creation. You ask what he is about to create, and are told, *that* is uncertain. Would you not be astonished? Rather, do you not now say, that it is impossible to suppose this; for it is utterly contrary to the attributes of God? To conceive of God's commencing the work of creation without having formed any previous plan, is derogatory to his wisdom and dignity.

It is, then, admitted, that the representation which the Scripture gives of the work of creation is essential to all just ideas of God. Here we perceive the order which clearly indicates plan. The great mass of the globe is first formed; then light is poured on it; the water is received into a grand reservoir, that the dry land may appear; vegetables, for the food of the future inhabitants, are made to grow; the living creatures are formed to inhabit the waters, the

air, and the land ; and last of all, the dwelling being made and furnished, the great resident is introduced. “ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth; and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”—Genesis i. 26.

Who does not see that this order springs from the wise arrangements of a mind that has its work before it? And who can deny that this is essential to all just notions of an intelligent creator?

Suppose, now, it were asked, when the first pair was created, why a world so large was formed for the residence of two rational creatures? Could you suppose the Deity would say, “ I never thought of that: when I made the globe, I did not determine how many should live upon it”? Is not the scriptural representation the only one worthy of God—that he said to the first pair, “ be fruitful and multiply and *fill* the earth and subdue it? For I created it not in vain, I formed it to be inhabited”? Here, therefore, we have marks of a preconcerted plan, which provides for every circumstance and every event.

Suppose, again, any one were to say, will all these beings that are to fill the earth be good or evil? Could you suppose the Creator would reply, “ that I do not know: I never thought of it; for it never entered into my mind, in consequence of its having no plan.” For if this were not thought of, how could it be known whether it were desirable to create man or not? Unless *all* the consequences were in the Creator’s view, and all were provided for, it would be impossible to determine whether it would be better to create, or not to create. He that, without knowing this, should still resolve to act; and to do that which must have the most momentous consequences, must be regarded, not as a wise, but as a

rash being. Power, and especially creative power, in such hands, must be regarded with terror, rather than with confidence and delight. We cannot bring ourselves to suppose that God would resolve to create, without having all the consequences of his conduct in view, and having determined, that, taking every thing into account, it was better upon the whole that such a world as this should exist, rather than not exist.

This, however, supposes that every being and every event was clearly in the Creator's view. For, if you suppose that one being, or one event, might have existence, unforeseen by the Creator, from the beginning; why not another, and another, till at length the whole might not be foreseen or provided for? But we have already seen how incongruous is the idea of an infinitely wise Creator working in the dark, or employing the omnipotence of his hands to create, with his eyes shut to the future consequences of his own conduct. If you suppose that some beings, or occurrences, might intentionally be left out of the plan, though others might be foreseen and provided for, we ask how any being can come into existence without the Creator's design? And, if God be supposed to leave, in the midst of a comprehensive plan, some things to occur unprovided for, he must, in order wisely to determine upon this, know what these things are, that he might be sure it would be better not to include these in his general plan of prescience, or supervision. We are thus brought to this contradiction, that God must know *every* future event, in order to determine that he will not foreknow *some* events.

There is, in fact, no way of avoiding the idea of a plan so comprehensive and so minute as to amount to the Scripture doctrine avowed in the text, that God worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. In this way, every wise man acts, just in proportion as he is wise. If he builds a house,



he sits down to count the cost. But this he cannot really do, without drawing the plan and determining on the materials, as well as the extent of the building. If any thing is not provided for in the plan, but is left to be arranged at the moment, it is an impeachment of his wisdom as a builder. For when the moment comes that demands this additional arrangement, the best way of doing the thing is often found to be precluded by some other parts of the building already executed ; so that the builder has but a choice among evils, and must do what he can, not being able to do what he ought. The more ignorant the builder is, the more of these unforeseen occurrences there will be in his work ; but the more completely he is master of his art, the more perfectly will his plans provide for every thing, and preclude the recurrence of the untoward events which embarrass the ignorant.

In like manner, an intelligent and prudent traveler provides for every thing, before he sets out on his journey. He marks out his route, determines on his stages, fixes on his inns, procures his letters of credit, and leaves to accident nothing that foresight can possibly arrange. If this does not extend to every thing, it is because he *cannot* foresee, or provide for every thing. In fact, this forms the distinction between a wise man and a fool ; that wise men act according to a plan, and fools by accident ; so that you can always calculate upon what a wise man will do, but never upon what a fool may blunder upon. In this inquiry into the propriety of God's acting according to a plan, we have necessarily anticipated the reverse of that hypothesis, at which however it may be useful to give a hasty glance.

Would it be better that the world should be left to chance, which the denial of predestination, or God's counsel for the government of the world, would imply ? Reverse, now, all the former suppositions. Instead of proceeding according to a



regular plan, you must conceive of God as creating by accident. You must suppose that he forms man, before he has created a world for him to live in, or stand upon. All sorts of inconveniences and inconsistencies must be supposed to arise from such conduct, and every step of the process will convince you that the omnipotence which could create, must be accompanied by the prescience which *could*, and the prudence which *would* contrive and plan.

But we will conceive of the world as created, and will now consider how it would go on, if the Creator had no plan, but left every thing to arise by chance. Events would then take the Deity by surprise. For if things were not foreseen, they must come by what is equivalent to surprise. The Creator must then be supposed to be growing wiser every day. At the commencement of the world, he must have been ignorant, compared with his present state; as we, at the beginning of life, knew nothing of what we become acquainted with, as life advances in its career. Is this consistent with the idea of an infinitely perfect being? Must not every one who maintains, in any rational sense, the being of a God, conceive him to be omniscient? And does not omniscience include prescience?

Some, however, may say, the Deity may foresee what will happen, without having formed any plan of his own, or having passed any such decree as predestination implies. If this were granted, it would not answer the end for which it is adduced. For, if we suppose the Creator merely to foresee *with certainty*, so as 'o preclude ignorance beforehand, and surprise when events occur, he must determine, either to permit, or to hinder. If he permit, the event is then supposed inevitable; and if he hinder, it then cannot happen; and either way, he must have his own purposes in his mind, and these, being the designs of an immutable mind, must have all the definiteness, and all the certainty that belong to

predestination, and for which it is too often condemned.

If, to avoid this, men recur again to the idea of a God without prescience, or plan, and a world that goes on by chance ; we must conceive, not merely of ignorance in Deity, and of perpetual surprise, as events occur ; but we must also suppose, that many events will both be wrong in themselves, so as to be in their own nature displeasing to God, and also absolutely evil in their whole connexion, and all their consequences ; so that if they had been foreseen, the Deity would have deemed it right to interpose his omnipotence, to prevent their occurrence. For, if God is not omniscient, and does not form any plan concerning the whole future history of the world, what security can there be that many such events will not arise ? In fact, what security can the Deity have that the whole history of the world shall not be a complete tissue of such events ? The creative act of Deity, in giving being to such a world, may thus be worse than a nullity ; and it may turn out, that it had been better if creatures had not existed. No security against this can be found, but in the prescience of Deity, and his complete view of all the consequences of creation, with such determinations of his mind, as amount to what is called in Scripture, predestination.

It is true, that events actually do occur in a world into which sin has entered, which are in themselves or their own moral character, displeasing to God, as being contrary to his law, which is our rule of duty. But that which is in itself evil, and justly punished as such, may be capable of being so overruled, that, for the sake of its connexions and consequences, it may be upon the whole fit to be permitted. Such is sin. The entrance of it into the world, the Scriptures say, was foreseen. Christ is said to have been “ foreordained before the foundation of the world, as a lamb slain to take away the sin of the world.” In

the fulness of time, at the very period determined, he came, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Here, both the evil of sin, as requiring a sacrifice or atonement to divine justice, and the certainty of the occurrence of sin, a certainty that existed before the foundation of the world, are clearly taught. All that Christ should suffer from wicked men was foretold ; every thing happened, according to the prophecies ; so that he could not die till they had mocked his last sorrows by offering him vinegar. "Then having received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." It is, however, said to his murderers, "him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." The blood which they imprecated on themselves and their children, still cries to heaven against them, and they are suffering all the bitter consequences of having killed the Prince of life. Yet the crucifixion of Christ, though the foulest crime that was ever committed on earth, was in another view, and in its final results, not only permitted for greater good, but ordained as the greatest good. "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A clue to the understanding of this mystery was given, in the words of Joseph to his brethren. "And Joseph said unto them, fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."—Gen. i. 19, 20. Thus it is said that God *sent* Joseph before them. "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant."—Ps. cv. 17.

For this is the glory of God's plan, that, while men act freely, he, foreseeing all their volitions, and all their actions, makes use of them, to accomplish what men never intended; so that by what

was guilty in them, he bring to pass what is glorious to him. In other instances, he frustrates the designs of men, and prevents that which they intended to accomplish. Thus he says, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."—Is. liv. 16, 17. Many times, therefore, when the enemies of Jesus would have seized him and taken away his life, he escaped out of their hands; "because his hour was not yet come." When he said, on hearing of Lazarus's death, "Let us go into Judea again;" and the disciples exclaimed, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" He replied, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." Hence has arisen the expression, almost proverbial, "we are all immortal, till our work is done." That the whole volume of Revelation supposes the existence of a perfect plan for the management of human affairs, may be considered as proved; and we may now ask, "Is not this preferable to chance?"

But some may inquire, is there no medium between these two? May we not conceive of something that is neither predestination nor chance? If, by this, is meant something that has the advantages of foresight, plan, or fixed counsel, and yet has not the essential properties of predestination, I answer, Of no such thing can I conceive. Predestination, or the counsel of God for the government of the world, means nothing more than the exercise of divine prescience, with the decision of the divine will, concerning all that shall occur in the whole crea-

tion. Whatever objections are raised against predestination must either be imaginary, or must lie against it as a fixed plan. But how can we abandon the idea of a plan, and yet expect its benefits? Can we have the fruit without the tree? And if we reject the doctrine of a determinate counsel, are we not left to accident, or chance?

If it be said that we may combine these two extremes, and form one system out of them; is it not obvious that we must then have the evils of both, without the advantage of either? We must have both predestination and chance, sometimes being regulated by the first, and, at other times, the sport of the last. But the whole system would not then have the advantage of completeness; for it would often be marked by the conflict of jarring principles. Of the benefits of chance, I cannot conceive, and therefore will not say these will be checked and prevented by the interposition of predetermined plan; but I do say, that whatever advantages would result from a comprehensive and settled system, would be prevented, wherever blind chance should be left to rule. The Governor of the world would then resemble an incompetent builder, who, forming an incomplete plan, left some parts of the edifice to be arranged, not by the ignorant labourer, but by the timber, bricks and mortar.

There is still another supposition. Might not God, it is said, be conceived of as interposing in the progress of the world's history, and arranging things, as circumstances may arise? Certainly; we can conceive of such a state of things: but what would be its advantages? We should, indeed, escape what is thought the evil of a comprehensive eternal plan; but we must then have many petty temporary plans. And of what use would these be, in the estimation of him who objects to predestination as a plan? Could they be of any avail, if they did not interpose before events occurred, so as to

prevent those which would be, on the whole, undesirable? Could this be effected without the *foresight* of human action, and of what are called, contingent events? Have we not, then, all that are called the evils of predestination—prescience, and control of human actions, and the certainty of future occurrences—at any rate to that extent to which the temporary interference of Deity applies? But, with these evils, we should not have the advantages of predestination; for the occasional interposition of Deity could only apply to parts of the system of human affairs, and these could be but partially rectified by any controlling influence, on account of their connexion with preceding events, which have already made sure of existence.

Is not, then, one eternal foresight preferable to original blindness, followed by many detached glances? For, if some events may, with propriety, be foreseen, why not all? If human actions may be subjected to divine prescience, in any case; why not in every case? If God may exercise his perfect prescience and omnipotent control, one moment before the event, why not one hour, one day, one age, or a whole eternity?

May we not, then, conclude that we have ascertained the *right*, and found that, on the one hand, there is no medium between a fixed plan for the regulation of all things, and leaving every thing to chance; and that, on the other, design is preferable to accident, or that the view which the Scriptures give of the government of the world, according to the divine counsel, or purpose, usually called predestination, is the only rational hypothesis in which a wise man can acquiesce?

Some, however, ask, “how can the Scriptures be consistent with themselves in laying down this doctrine of predestination, and still addressing men as free agents, who possess that control over their actions, which renders them accountable to their



moral governor? These two tenets are so contrary, that he who holds the one, must, to be rational, abandon the other." This is more easily said than proved, and a mere assertion on the one side might be fairly met by a simple denial on the other.

The Scriptures represent God as working all things according to the counsel of his own will; and man as acting so freely that he is accountable to God, and will be judged and treated accordingly. Here then, we must conceive of a plan in the divine mind, vast and comprehensive, yet minute and all-pervading, extending, not merely to physical events, but to the most delicate mental and moral actions. The Creator secures the accomplishment of his purposes, without interfering with the freedom and accountability of his creatures. This plan, therefore, equally excludes chance and fate. All must admit, that, if this can be effected, every conceivable advantage will be secured, and even more than is usually deemed possible.

But who is competent to pronounce such a combination of advantages impossible? Will mortals affirm, that Deity cannot form such a plan? Do we, can we, know enough, either of predestination, or of liberty, to authorize us to affirm that they cannot be made to harmonize? Is not a universe gloriously harmonious, made up of opposing forces, and apparently contradictory qualities? The centripetal and centrifugal forces keep the solar system in motion, and every celestial body in its place. Gravitation compresses, and caloric expands bodies. The inertness of matter, is overcome by the activity of mind. Motion and rest combine to preserve our mortal frame. In innumerable instances, we cannot discover how these operate and concur, to produce one harmonious effect in opposite ways. Of the fact, however, we are convinced.

That no human, no created mind, is equal to the complete grasp of predestination, may surely be



admitted, without difficulty, for it is the plan of an infinite intelligence. The power which created, and still supports all things, is so far beyond our comprehension, that we naturally conclude that it is guided by counsel, and regulated by a plan as far beyond our conception.

As to liberty, with which predestination is supposed to interfere, this is far from being perfectly understood, as it should be before we pronounce it inconsistent with predestination. It is, to the present day, disputed among philosophers, wherein liberty consists. Perhaps the simplest definition, that it consists in doing as we like, is the only one into which men, in general, can enter, with entire satisfaction. Taking this for granted; who is competent to assert, that God cannot foresee what every man will like to do, in every possible case? And who can affirm that God could not lay his plans so perfectly as to leave to every man this liberty, and yet secure the accomplishment of every event, which seems, upon the whole, good? We, ourselves, with all the limitation of our powers, can judge, with a high degree of certainty, what some persons will do, in given cases. As we increase in penetration of mind, and in familiar acquaintance with any individual, we become better qualified to calculate, not only on his conduct, but even on his views and feelings, in the various circumstances in which he can be placed. But, as the Deity rises infinitely above us in knowledge, so he ascends from probability to absolute certainty, with regard to all future events, even including the free actions of moral agents.

I have adopted the simplest view of liberty, in order to combine the sentiments of different schools with regard to the freedom of the will, and to avoid the intricacies of metaphysical discussion. But if we reject the notion introduced above, there remains but another that can demand our assent—the

will is free, when it adopts or follows, the last dictate of the understanding. For, as to what is called liberty of indifference, or the self-determining power of the will; it is either an association of words without meaning, or it is included in the first definition of liberty, that it consists in a man being left to do as he likes. If, then, you consider the will as following the last dictate of the understanding, the Deity can surely foresee how things will appear to creatures of a certain character, and can so form his plans as to secure the accomplishment of his own purposes, without violating the liberty of his creatures.

The interference of divine grace with the natural operation of the human powers, will be the subject of consideration in another lecture, where it may be shewn that the Scriptures teach no such interposition of divine influence as is contrary to the accountability of man. This influence is a vital part of the moral providence of God, by which the greatest good of the universe is secured, and all things are made to work together for his glory, and his people's welfare.

May I not now presume that you are satisfied of what I have called the *right* of the question—that it is fit and proper that the universe should be governed by a comprehensive and efficient plan, rather than be left to chance or accident, or whatever else may be conceived in opposition to predestination? Is there any thing that can endure examination, but such a scheme as is intended to be expressed by that word fairly understood? If any mean by it, fate, or fatality, or any thing contrary to the free determination of God to overrule all things, so as to secure the best result, with the accountability of his rational creatures, and his own glory, they attach an idea to the term which does not accord with the predestination of the Scriptures. These should not be charged with the mistakes of their expositors, or

the errors of ultra systematisers, who prefer splendid paradoxes to sober truth.

2. Let us now proceed to consider the *fact*.

Is there evidence that such a purpose of the divine mind has been formed, and that all things, great and small, are continually accomplishing the object God had in view, and are answering his great idea? With regard to creation, we have seen that no rational notion can be formed of that great work, without supposing that every thing was formed according to a perfect plan. Those creatures that were first formed were adapted to those which were to come afterwards, and though man is the last of the creation, every thing is adapted to him and fitted for his use.

But the revolutions of human affairs are the great objects of the divine decree. To a Christian, the fulfilment of prophecy is a decisive proof of God's working all things according to the counsel of his own will. "And God said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."—Gen. xv. 13—16.

A believer in divine revelation marks the way in which this prediction was fulfilled. Jacob's partiality for Joseph excited the envy of his brethren; the dreams of the favourite inflamed this envy into madness, and designs of murder; the intercession of Reuben, and the passing by of travelling merchants, gave rise to the selling of Joseph for a slave; his elevation to the government of that land brought

Jacob and all the family into Egypt, where they were, first oppressed, and then delivered, as God foretold. The prophecies concerning Christ were at once comprehensive and minute ; but they were fulfilled to the letter, by the voluntary movements of men, some of whom knew them not, and others, either thought not of them, or, if they did, would rather have proved Christ an impostor, than have demonstrated him to be the very person in whom the Scriptures were to be fulfilled.

But, with infidels, who reject the whole Bible, both prophecy and history, this evidence of a divine plan, constantly accomplished, will avail nothing ; though they must, in all candour, admit that believers have here a strong reason for maintaining what their opponents deny. We turn, however, to another source of proof. It is manifest to all, that there are incidents frequently occurring, which are so strikingly adapted to answer certain important ends, that, if these had really been designed, and the incidents arranged to accomplish the object, the one could not have been more exactly suited to the other. Christians mark these occurrences, and see the hand of God in them, exclaiming, “ whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” If these things escape the notice of the thoughtless or profane, there is a providence in human affairs which is so obvious to all who look *carefully* within, or around them, as to give rise to Flavel’s pithy remark, “ He that eyes providence, shall never want providences to eye.” “ The romance of history” has been exhibited from the press, and has shewn that fiction has been surpassed by fact. But each one has his own history, which the world never saw. This is, to the individual himself, so deeply interesting, that he thinks it can be equalled by the memoirs of no other. Yet every one says the same, and were the whole history of every man laid open,

what a world of wonders would it exhibit! The doctrine of the Scriptures, however, is, that the *church* is the special object of that providence which rules the world. "All things are made to work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose." Of all the heroes of antiquity, there is none of whom such wonders are related as even profane writers tell of Cyrus. Herodotus revels here in fable; but Xenophon, though more sober, has made "the education of Cyrus" a beautiful romance. It is certain that he was mentioned by name, in the prophecies of Scripture, ages before he was born. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am the Lord, and there is none else." Isaiah xlv. 1—6.

Here the mighty conqueror is declared to be raised up, for the sake of God's people, to liberate them from captivity in Babylon, and send them back, to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem. In like manner, Augustus, whose rise to universal empire, was marked by a special providence, was the chosen instrument for the fulfilment of Scrip-

ture; for by his decree, "that all the world should be taxed," Christ was born at Bethlehem, according to the prediction of Micah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." Micah v. 2—4.

Among the people of God, therefore, are found the most remarkable records of providence, and who can wonder, if among them, there is an unconquerable conviction, that a Divine counsel rules all human affairs, so that God will accomplish for his people all that was in his heart?

It is known to all, that Christians expect the universal prevalence and triumph of religion. The discourses of divines and the songs of poets, have, for ages, attested the force of this expectation. And who can deny that the progress of events is tending, with a powerful current, to justify these hopes? Things, over which Christians had no control, have conspired, in great numbers, for many years, to produce a new and happier order of things. The efforts, and even the triumphs of the enemies of Christ have contributed to extend his kingdom. The taking of Constantinople by the Turks, who are the most bigoted Mahomedans, dispersed the Greeks through Europe, which thus received a new impulse; and just when the Greek language and manuscripts were brought into the west, the discovery of printing multiplied books, and operated like morning, to wake a slumbering world. From that

moment, knowledge gave power to Christendom, and the reaction has been felt by the Mussulman world, which is sinking under the superiority of the cross. The pursuits of science have extended the triumphs of the Christian faith. Captain Cook's voyage, to observe, in the South seas, the transit of Venus, opened a new field for missions. The flattering tales that were told of Omai and his island, attracted the attention of Christians, and when great numbers combined to send the messengers of the cross among idolatrous nations, Tahiti was chosen as the first scene of their labours. Such triumphs have been enjoyed there as have created a new era, both to the church and the world; for the influence of Christianity in Polynesia is now extending, as from a centre, to a circumference which stretches away beyond the most extensive vision. The Societies recently formed for the diffusion of knowledge and religion, have surpassed the most sanguine expectations of their founders, and convinced them that they acted under the impulse of a mind whose views were beyond their own. Who could have anticipated the extent to which the Bible Society has carried its operations and its influence? The opposition of enemies has, in almost every instance, promoted the cause they intended to destroy. At length, the very infidel is anticipating a superior order of things; for, unable to resist the evidence that a new and mighty impulse has been given to human affairs, and that some grand improvement is inevitable, the Deist, and even the Atheist, talks of a Millennium. But it must be remembered that the Bible first broached the idea, and Christians first adopted and acted upon it; so that the fair inference is, that it was a part of the plan of "him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The fact is, then, established, to the conviction of every perspicacious observer of human affairs,



that there is neither chance, nor accident, in God's world ; but that he has formed his plan, which provides for every event ; that he has made all things for himself, and is steadily pursuing his great designs ; for "the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

What, then, is the conclusion which every thoughtful and candid mind must form ?

Is it not manifest that the Bible is the Word of God ? I have met the most astounding doctrine, for which the Scriptures are most severely condemned, and have shewn that this very obnoxious tenet of predestination is inevitable. Take it, as it stands in Scripture, without human additions ; and reason pleads for it, no less than faith ; and both declare, that God governs the world according to a fixed plan, which includes all events, but leaves to man all that liberty which is essential to accountability, and thus secures every possible good.

This, which has been pronounced so unreasonable, that the book which teaches it is thereby proved false, has been adopted by the greatest philosophers as a speculative truth. The *fate*, of which Homer speaks, was but an imperfect glimmering light shed from this doctrine, and mingled with the smoke of heathenish error. In all ages, there have been men who have seen, that there is no medium between the doctrine of the Scripture, and that of chance, and who have, therefore, deemed it essential to all just philosophic views of the universe, to consider it governed by the Creator, in morals as well as in physics, and overruled for the attainment of a fixed and desirable end.

Leibnitz, the universal genius of his day, the competitor with Newton for the honour of the discovery of fluxions, has defended predestination merely as a philosophic truth. These are his words :

" I now speak of the wisdom of God, which, on account of its immensity, is called omniscience.

This, as it is most perfect in itself, embraces every idea and every truth, that is, every thing, both simple and complex, which the intellect can contemplate: it is, therefore, employed on possible, as well as actual things. The knowledge of possible things, which is called science of simple intelligence, is employed concerning things and their connections; and each of these may be either necessary or contingent. Possible contingencies may be viewed either separately or combined into complete worlds, to all possible and infinite extent, any one of which is perfectly known to God, although, out of these, a single one only is brought into existence; for it is of no use to feign many actual worlds, since one alone embraces the universe of creatures, of every place and time, and in that sense we here use the term world. The knowledge of actual things, or the world brought into existence, and of all things in it, past, present and future, is called the science of vision; nor does it differ from the science of simple intelligence of this same world, viewed as possible, except that there is added a reflex knowledge, to that which God has by his own decree to bring it into existence. There is no need of any foundation of Divine prescience. That which is commonly called middle science is comprised in that of simple intelligence, in that sense which we have explained. The antecedent will of God is absolutely sincere and pure, and is not to be confounded with velleity, by which any one would if he could, and wishes he could; which can never be said of God; nor is it to be confounded with conditional will, of which we do not here speak. But the antecedent will of God tends to the production of all good, and to the exclusion of all evil, exactly in that proportion in which those things would be absolutely good or evil. How sincere this will is, God has himself declared when he has said so positively, ‘that he willeth not the death of a sinner,’ that he willeth

all men to be saved, and that he hateth sin. The consequent will of God arises from the concurrence of all antecedent wills ; so that, when the effects of all cannot possibly exist together, the greatest possible effect that can be obtained, is secured by his wisdom and power. This will is usually called decree, whence it appears that even the antecedent wills are not entirely vain, but have their own efficacy, which effect, however, is limited by the concurrence of various antecedent wills. But the decretive will, the result of all possible inducements, always obtains full effect, as long as power is not wanting to him that wills, as it never can be in God. It is in decretive will alone that the axiom has effect, ' he who can and wills, acts ;' for with him who comprises, under the name of power, the knowledge that is requisite to action, there can be nothing wanting, within or without, to produce the effect. Nor is there any thing detracted from the felicity of the volition of Deity, though all his will in some sense should not obtain full effect; for he wills what is good, only in proportion to the good which is in it, and he then perfectly satisfies his volition, when the best result is obtained.

“ The goodness of God is referred either to the creatures as a whole, or especially to intelligent creatures. In the former mode, it constitutes his providence, in creating and governing the universe ; in the latter, his righteousness in ruling those creatures especially who are endued with reason. Because wisdom guides the goodness of God in his conduct towards his creatures. The consequence is, that Divine providence shows itself in the whole order of the universe, and we must say, that God, out of infinite series' of things, has chosen the best, and that is it which actually exists. For all things in the universe are harmonious ; nor can he, who is infinitely wise, decree, except with the whole case in view. In detached parts, separately considered.

there may be room for a previous will ; but in the whole, nothing but a decretive will can be understood, nor does the certainty of things at all interfere with the utility of prayers and labours to obtain those future things which we desire ; for when this series of things was present to the view of God, before he could be supposed to decree it, prayers and other causes of effects were in his view, as among the things to be chosen ; and whatever *now* moves God to act, or to permit, *then* induced him to decree what he would do or permit. Whatever, therefore, appears to us reprehensible in the works of God, we should consider not to be sufficiently known to us ; and he is the wise man who judges that nothing better could even be wished for, than what God has done. But, with regard to the best series of things, Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, was the chief reason for choosing it ; and, as far as he is a creature, must be included in that noblest order, as a part, nay, even the head, of the created universe, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, in whom all nations are to be blessed, and by whom the creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." *Leibnitz Causa Dei, Asserta per justitiam ejus, cum cæteris ejus perfectionibus, cunctisque actionibus conciliatam.*

It must, however, be admitted that this is a speculation awfully grand. Nor can it be denied, that, at first sight, it appears fraught with tremendous consequences. Few persons escape the impression that the predestination of the Scriptures must be identical with the fate of the heathens and Mahomedans, and must, therefore, be immoral in its tendencies, by paralysing all human effort. But many of the most important and most incontrovertible truths are known to present, to the first glance, the aspect, not only of falsehood, but of contradiction to other known truths. Who is there that re-

members the time when he first received information of the world being a globe, revolving in the air, and the inhabitants on the other side standing with their feet turned towards ours, and who does not also remember how false, and even ludicrous, this idea, appeared? But the same evidence that overcame the incredulity of others, vanquished our objections, and we have quietly settled down in the conviction that what we once thought so grossly incredible, is strictly true. We admire what we once ridiculed, or despised; and we adore the profound wisdom of the Creator, who has constructed the world upon a principle so far beyond all human device. In like manner, we should adore the wisdom that revealed its counsels in the Holy Scriptures. What philosophers may have deemed incredible, in the days in which Moses wrote, he has revealed as a simple fact, that the whole world is under the government of an infinite mind, which has provided for every event; and that the result of the whole shall be proved to be as good, as the details may have seemed evil.

The supposed incompatibility of such a fixed plan and certain event, with human liberty and accountability, the sacred writers never notice; but treat man as free, and cite him to the tribunal of the Eternal, to give account to him who will judge every man according to his deserts. The supposed contradiction is now pronounced, by the best metaphysicians, a mere illusion. President Edwards, of New England, has shewn that the divine decrees are perfectly consistent with the only notion of liberty that can rationally be entertained.

But, whence is it, that the Scriptures are always found to be in advance of human science? Why are the boasted refinements of philosophy confined, on moral and theological subjects, to a demonstration of the truth which the Bible taught ages ago? The Hebrew prophets, and the fishermen of Galilee have left nothing for Aristotle, or Leibnitz, or

Locke, or Edwards, or Hartley, to discover. The vast idea of the moral providence of God, which even highly cultivated minds, in the present day, can scarcely receive, is conveyed in the writings of simple men, at a remote period, and in such a way as proves that it was not the fruit of their own research. What conclusion can we form, except that the Scriptures are “not of private suggestion, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?”

Is it not, then, at immense risk that we reject the Scriptures, on account of certain parts of their contents, which seem to us not true? It is readily admitted that we have a right to demand evidence of the truth of that which claims our faith. The Bible charges us “to try all things, and hold fast that which is good.” But, when we have been compelled to admit the external evidences, we should proceed to examine the internal characters of the writings, with extreme modesty, and fervent prayer to the ‘Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.’ Nothing is more common than for men to reject any thing that bears the name of predestination, as unworthy even of examination. To such persons, it would be sufficient to prove the Bible itself false; if you could shew that it contained this obnoxious doctrine. Yet the philosophy of such Deists may be proved to be as false as their theology. The doctrine of the Bible, on this point, is so far from justifying the rejection of the sacred books, that it forms one of the most striking proofs of their inspiration. At any rate, a modest man would say, “This may be a subject too deep for me, one of which I am not qualified to judge; and as the most profound philosophers have received predestination for a metaphysical truth, it would be dangerous for me to reject, as false, a well attested revelation, merely because it asserts this doctrine to be true. Might I not find myself in

the predicament of him who should spurn the Principia of Newton, because they assert that there are antipodes?"

But let no one rest in a mere speculative assent, either to the Scriptures, or to their contents. Nothing should satisfy us but that which the Apostle declares to be the felicity of the Ephesians to whom he wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."—Ephes. i. 1—12.

"For whom he predestinated, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—Rom. viii. 32.

Those who find in themselves the marks of predestination to life, should adore God for his mercy, remembering, that though our liberty is not violated



by God's decrees; had we been left to our own counsels, we should have freely chosen death. Bless him, then, who has as freely chosen you to life. That he has a right to bestow undeserved favours where he pleases, cannot be denied. He exercises his sovereignty, only in bestowing good, while strict equity presides over punishment. This is manifest to all who attentively consider the works of his hands.

Under the shade of his all-comprehensive providence, let the believer rest secure. The convulsions of the world cannot terrify him, who says, the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."—Ps. xlv. 1—7.

How blessed is the man who sees the light of God's providence thus shining through the universe, and ordering all events to his own glory and the highest possible good! Such a one may always say, as a pious mother did, when deprived of her only child, "It is well." He that dreads fortune, which is the world's god, relies with unbounded confidence on infinite wisdom and almighty power. How delightful to know that nothing can happen, but it shall either be the work of our heavenly Father; or, if the work of his enemies and ours, it shall be by him overruled for good! Angels he employs

for his children's guard, and devils he holds in chains which they cannot break. Surely "because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."—Ps. xci. 9—13.

While others fret or faint, thinking that all goes wrong, and that, in the sport of chance, they shall be crushed, the believer in God's all-pervading providence, smiles at the apparent confusion, and pities those that know not him, who "rides on the whirlwind and manages the storm." Others may see *fate*, blindfolded, but omnipotent, deciding the destiny of men; but the Christian exults to behold him that is all eye, and all heart, and all arm, guiding the vast movements of the universe, so that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and as a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father, neither shall a hair of our head fall without his permission.

But if we are thus at our ease, with regard to events, it is that we may occupy ourselves wholly with duty, in which lies our true interest. While God takes care of what men would call our fortunes, we should count ourselves blessed in being employed to take care of his honour. Of this, the pious upon earth are, under God, the guardians. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." By maintaining the truth of Revelation, you perform an important service to the universe, and in defending his counsels, you both fortify your own minds, and keep alive the knowledge and the fear of God among men. This is the glory of God's immense, all-comprehen-

sive plan, that it employs every just thought and every pious affection, to accomplish the most desirable objects, for his own honour, the good of the righteous, and the attainment of the final result of the universe. What value this stamps on every emotion of piety, and on every movement of duty! Always consider yourselves, therefore, relieved from an anxious care that can do no good, to consecrate yourselves to that course of obedience, which will do the highest good.

With joy, may you look forward, to what the Scriptures call, 'the day of Revelation.' Then, on the mount of vision, you shall survey the whole scene, and behold the Creator, as at the commencement, surveying the works of his hands, and saying, at the close, "it is all very good." Like the Saviour on the cross, bowing his head, and exclaiming, "it is finished;" the Supreme Governor shall, with infinite satisfaction, bend over the concluding scene, and say, "it is done;" "the mystery of God is finished;" while all the wise and holy shout, "Hallelujah, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

## LECTURE III.

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THE

# MEDIATION, INCARNATION, AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

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I TIMOTHY ii. 5, 6.

*“ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*

WHEN Simeon took the infant Saviour in his arms, he said to Mary, “ Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

If, therefore, infidels attack the person and mediation of Christ, they are but fulfilling those very Scriptures which they spurn. Yet who can wonder that the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh, crucified for us, should be a stumbling block to pride under the name of reason ? It bursts upon us as such a novelty, so out of all ordinary calculation, that it would be strange indeed, if none should exclaim, “ This is a hard saying, who can hear it ?”

Yet the very objection that is raised against the strangeness of this discovery of revelation, serves to confute the infidel. For what would he have said, if the Bible had contained nothing new, nothing but

what men had previously thought of? Would he not have exclaimed, "Call this a revelation! Why what does it reveal? What is there here that we could not have found out for ourselves?" He would have reminded us of the maxim of the Roman poet, that we should never introduce the Deity, but when there is some difficulty which none but a God can meet. If, then, we can succeed in proving the truth of the mediation, incarnation, and atonement of Christ, it must be admitted by the Deist that these are things which we could not know by the light of nature, or reason; so that they require and justify the interposition of God to make them known by special revelation.

I. The mediation of Christ, to which infidels object, is so far from being a mark of falsehood in the book which contains the doctrine, that it serves to prove the Bible true.

Mediation is too often introduced into human affairs to require any explanation. I need not say that men learned it in the school of revelation, but will concede to the Deist, if he requires it, that reason suggests the propriety of the practice. But I ask, what, then, becomes of the objection to divine revelation, because it teaches the doctrine of the mediation of Christ?

Infidels, however, spurn the notion, as degrading to man. They scorn to be indebted to another for their access to God, and contend that they have a right to approach the Deity in their own name.

I own that, when Christ says, "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me," it is not only to him glorious, but to us consoling, though at the same time humiliating. I am not unwilling that this humiliation should be expressed with the utmost force of human speech. But after all, I deny that this is any proof that the doctrine is not true. Every reflecting man must own that there are many things which are mortifying to our pride, and which never-

theless force themselves on our reason. Fain would we deny them, but we cannot. Proofs of this might be adduced; but they are rendered unnecessary; for every one must, at this moment, be recalling them to his own mind. But, then, I ask, where lies the blame? Not surely in the remedy, however humbling that may be; but in the disease, which rendered that humiliating process needful. Our pride may be mortified by the remedy: the true source of our degradation is the sin which threatens our ruin.

If a man stands condemned to death for his crimes, he needs a friend to intercede for him with the king, to obtain a royal pardon. But what would you think of the criminal, if he should turn round upon his friend, and reproach him for degrading the very person whose life he attempted to save? Would not the mediator and intercessor justly reply, it was not I that degraded you, but your own crime? If you were not permitted to enter the royal presence, that was because you were confined in the condemned cell. All I did was calculated to raise you, after you had ruined yourself.

That man is a sinner, and as such, obnoxious to death, is, alas, too manifest. Who will pretend that we are all that we ought to be? Who can deny that we are mortal? And who can avoid feeling that death is something like a punishment? When the Bible says, "the wages of sin is death," all that is within us echoes to the truth. Infidels themselves are foremost in reproaching mankind with every thing that is evil. The declamation against priestcraft is surely a serious charge; for if one part of our race has conspired to deceive the rest, on the most important subject, for the sake of power and of gain; this is criminal enough. We need go no farther to find proofs of human depravity and guilt.

The evils of bad government are another theme of perpetual declamation with infidels. Unhappily

there is but too much in the history of the world, to justify their heaviest censures. What is history but a record of human depravity? It has been said that so faithful was Shakespeare to nature, that, if the human race were extinct, and the writings of the dramatist alone remained, beings of another order might know, from them, what kind of creature man was. But who would not blush to think of being thus known? For what a compound of folly and wickedness would man appear, to those who should see him in that faithful mirror!

The sighs that fill the air, the tears and blood that water the earth, prove that misery is sin's shadow, ever at its heels, and that the moral governor of the world deems it right to employ the power in his hands, to make physical evil a check upon the moral, or to oppose suffering to sin.

This, then, is the true source of degradation—Sin, by which, as the prophet says, we have “degraded ourselves to hell.” The man that tells a lie, is sunken in his own estimation, and punished with his own contempt. He sinks also in the scale of society, and is treated as one whose word is not to be taken. The drunkard cannot escape the punishment that follows every one who has deprived himself of the guidance of reason; and when he returns to his senses, he feels that he despises himself. It is, then, a manifest determination of the moral governor, to follow sin, not only with misery, but with shame. And could he prove himself holy, if, having all honour at his disposal, he suffered it to remain untarnished with the man who had not only violated his own duty, but also opposed himself to the good order of the universe?

Let us hear no more of the humiliating nature of the doctrine of mediation; for all our shame must lie at the door of our sin. Who can lay us lower than we have laid ourselves, by rebelling against God?



If, then, it be admitted, that it is humiliating to us, that we cannot approach a just and holy God, but through a mediator; this must be ascribed to our guilt. And how can we expect, or wish, that a righteous governor should adopt a mode of procedure towards us, that should contradict facts, denying at once our sin and his justice? Would not such conduct have exposed him to a more severe charge than that of humbling us? Was it not incumbent on him, to combine justice with mercy, and to condemn our conduct while he rescues our persons? Shall we quarrel with him, because he will not save our pride, as well as our souls?

Does he not, in every case, act in perfect analogy with this part of his conduct? Who could rise from moral prostration to rectitude, without humiliation? The man who is recovered from drunkenness is first made sensible of the degradation of his former habits; for unless he condemn them, and himself on account of them, he will never quit them; and, when become sober, his present self tells, to all around, that he is ashamed of his former self. He that utters a lie, is never truly recovered from the guilt, till he retracts; and can he do this without humiliation? Yet common sense and virtue have agreed in the maxim, that it is not the retraction, but the lie, that constitutes the shame. In every instance, our sin is our infamy, and our return to virtue is our restoration to honour. Nor is this less true, in the case before us. For our humiliation truly lies in having violated our duty to God; but when we return to seek his favour, through a mediator, we pursue the only path to honour. The road to glory consists in taking shame to ourselves, by the most humble and grateful improvement of the only method which lies open to us, for restoration to the favour of that great being who is the fountain of all honour.

For, if the mediation of Christ humbles us, it also

exalts us. If we had fallen into a pit, we should be placed under a humiliating necessity of crying for help. But, if a prince, on passing by, should pity us, and stretch out a helping hand, we should feel the honour. Should this introduce us to his acquaintance also, and lay the foundation of a friendship for life, we should think less of the humbling circumstance which led to it, than of the honour and happiness which afterwards shed a lustre on our days. Our sin is, indeed, the occasion of our requiring a mediator, to give us access to God; but our Saviour is divine, and he, to rescue us, took our nature, became our brother, and is ever after our friend. This mediator, who takes us by the hand to bring us back to God, is the first of beings, and the man must be proud as Lucifer who would spurn the idea of being indebted to Jesus Christ. When the apostle, in the text, says, "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus," he reminds us of the honour which our nature enjoys in having such a one for our brother; for "he is not ashamed to call us brethren, saying, I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

The doctrine of mediation, which forms the prominent feature in the revelation of the Scriptures, is moreover analogous with acknowledged facts, and with the whole course of God's government.

It is notorious, that we are relieved from every thing that is humiliating and afflicting, by the mediation of others. That proud creature, man, comes into existence in the most dependent condition. There is nothing so helpless and pitiable as the newly born babe, however he may afterwards grow up to giant's stature, and strut, and swell, and despise his former self. But how is he raised from his prostrate condition? Is it not by the mediation of parents? They pitied his wretchedness; they

succoured his helplessness; they protected his weakness; they clothed his nakedness; they satisfied his cravings; they instructed his ignorance; they corrected his waywardness; they reared him up from helpless infancy to vigorous maturity; and, alas! are too often rewarded for it, by his rebellion and his scorn.

When sickness loosens the girdle of our strength, maddens our brain, and lays us prostrate on our bed, how are we relieved and restored? Is it not by the mediation of physicians and friends? If left to ourselves, should we not perish? Are we not *then* compelled to come down from our proud independence, and submit to the most humiliating obligations to foreign aid?

Is not the very knowledge that forms our power, and too often feeds our pride, a memorial of our obligation to others? For what do we know, what can we know, when left to our own resources? Cast by ourselves in a wood, should we not go on all-fours? Could we learn to walk, or talk, much less to read, or write, by our own spontaneous efforts? Should we not perish from hunger, and cold and nakedness, if no kind friend administered to our wants?

When oppressed and enslaved, what hope have we of liberty but from foreign aid? Who breaks the chains of the much injured African? Is it not the Briton, who is already free? And whence should help come to the needy, but from those who are in possession of abundance, benevolence and power?

That we should be delivered from moral evils, by the mediation of those who are in a superior moral state, is, to say the least, equally natural, just, and fit. But is it not even more proper? For moral evils destroy our fitness for self relief, by taking away our inclination. Where vice prevails, how is it to be checked, but by the interposition of the virtuous? To stem the torrent of drunkenness, who form Tem-

perance Societies, but the sober part of the population? Are penitentiaries for the rescue of prostitutes, the work of their own class, or of the chaste and virtuous? Who, but the pious, will rouse a thoughtless world to the fear and love of God?

And is not this a proof of a wise and holy government? For it puts honour on virtue, and confers felicity on the pious, to make them benefactors to their race; since "it is more blessed to give than to receive." If the immoral are degraded to the condition of paupers, who need to be relieved by others, this is but a part of that punishment which an Almighty moralist inflicts on vice. The obligation conferred on society, by those whose mediation rescues it from sin and its consequent misery, not only exalts the benefactors in the scale of being, but also binds man to man, by the most endearing links of benefits given and received.

That Jesus Christ, the grand mediator between God and man, should be exalted to the highest rank, and enjoy the lofty title of the Saviour, is obviously fit and just. He is the only one in our nature who presents an example of perfect virtue, and who has shewn that double zeal for justice, and for mercy, for God and for man, which gives him a claim to rank as the bond of union between all interests, and the centre of attraction to the whole moral world. He is entitled to all the regards which were directed towards him as mediator; for he is not more exalted above us, in the honours, than in the merits of virtue. The attention which our minds pay to him, and the confidence which our hearts repose in him, are as much a lesson of virtue, as a means of safety; for we are thus called to honour him who magnified the law which we had violated, and made *that* honourable which we had treated with scorn.

By the universal law of mediation, which we have seen to prevail in human affairs, we are taught the

great Christian doctrine on which hang our everlasting hopes. The parent who fed, and nourished, and protected, and instructed us; the friend, or nurse, or physician, who soothed and healed us; and every benefactor, who in any way has served us, has read us a lesson of heavenly wisdom, teaching us to bow and own our obligation to the great friend of our species, who interposed, to reconcile us to an offended God, and restore us to his favour and image, which we had lost. He that spurns the Christian doctrine of mediation, and scorns to owe his admission into the Divine presence, to another, ought, to be consistent, to reject all foreign aids, and not only refuse the medicine, but even the food, prepared by any hand but his own. Nor would even this be enough. For he should give back all that he ever received of physical, mental, or moral benefit, from any mortal. If he should say, as well he might, that is impossible; I reply, then it is impossible consistently to reject the doctrine of mediation.

I advance, then, to its principal effect.

II. The incarnation of Christ is the next object of attack by infidels, and must be regarded by the Christian, as the citadel of hope which he is called to defend.

It is taught in the following passage of Scripture, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true light,

which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John i. 1—14.

As this doctrine, of God manifest in the flesh, is declared to be the great mystery of godliness, we cannot wonder that it should stagger the minds of the ungodly, and be rejected with scorn. Those, however, who believe it, should be ready to give a reason "of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear." I shall adopt the same method as on a former occasion, and consider, first, the right, then, the fact. I proceed to shew

1. The right, or the fitness of this dispensation, that God should take our nature on him.

"It is too much to be true," says the infidel, "that God should stoop thus for the salvation of man, who is a mere atom in the universe." Now this objection, you will observe, is directly the reverse of that which we have just considered. The former represents man as degraded by the mediation of Christ, and the latter considers God degraded by affording him such help. The first finds fault with God, for not humouring our pride, the second accuses him of indulging it. The mediation of Christ is said to be too bad, and his incarnation too good, to be true. Now, when a person makes contradictory objections, we need not take much pains to answer him, for he, in fact, answers himself. The incarnation of Christ was but a part of the scheme of mediation, and a means of carrying it



into effect ; and when it is assailed by these opposite objections, we may be very easy ; for one neutralises the other, and both together shew that the unbeliever wants that consistency which is essential to sincerity, or even to common sense. Yet such are the attacks to which revelation is exposed. Now, it is said to tell us too little, and then, too much ; here, we are excessively debased, and there, unduly exalted ; one exclaims, salvation is too easy, and another, it is too difficult ; so that it is manifest nothing can please those who set up their own judgment against their Maker's ; and all things conspire to prove that man needs a guide, and requires the interposition of infallible wisdom, to teach him the way of life, which he would never find out for himself.

Who is able to say, and to prove, that it is an impossibility for Deity to join itself to humanity, so that the same person should be both God and man, according as you view him with regard to the one nature, or the other ? This has very frequently been illustrated by the nature of man, who is at once animal and intellectual, mortal and immortal, just as you consider him on the side of his body, or of his soul. To those who believe this doctrine of a body and a soul, the illustration serves as an argument derived from analogy ; but to those who deny the existence of a soul, we may say, is not man, both an animal, like any other, and intellectual, as no other is ? This human being, therefore, who is at once on the level with other living bodies, and exalted to be their lord, has in himself something to prepare him for the reception of a personage who is both our brother and our Lord.

That the union of Deity to humanity is physically impossible, no mortal has a right to assert ; for we know not enough, either of ourselves or of Deity, to understand what is possible in such a case. The extent of God's power no creature can ascertain.



That one person should be formed of two natures, some may think a contradiction, but who is able to define personality? Much more, may we ask, who can determine all possible modes of personality? While we cannot exactly understand our own, we surely may, without stretching modesty into timidity and folly, be afraid to assert that two natures, as different as the human and divine, could not form one person.

The *moral* impossibility of God's stooping thus far, to take our nature upon himself, is the grand, favourite objection of infidels. But who shall say what is the utmost condescension of a God? Who can, without presumption, assert that God cannot go so far as this? Look around the universe, and say whether creatures such as we are, are authorised to calculate upon all the possible modes in which the attributes of Deity will operate? Does he not take us by surprise, at every turn? Is he not perpetually doing what we should not previously have expected? Is any thing too great, or too good, too holy, or too kind, for him who made this world, "thus wondrous fair? Himself how wondrous then?"

The objection of Paine, that God would have nothing else to do but to go from world to world, in an endless succession of births and deaths, is easily answered. For how do we know that there are even other worlds than those which the Scriptures reveal, much less that there is an endless succession of worlds? And if there are, how know we that sin has entered into them? Revelation informs us, that one order of beings, beside ourselves, has sinned; but that redemption is not granted them, for "Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through

fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”—Heb. ii. 14—17.

But this one act of condescension, the incarnation of Christ for our redemption, we are assured extends its benefits beyond this world ; for “now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places may be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Ephesians iii. 10, 11.

This grand display of the goodness of God and the evil of sin which Christ’s incarnation and sacrifice afford, may prevent the farther spread of the contagion of sin ; saying to that dreadful evil, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be staid.” This would be perfectly analogous with God’s usual conduct, which is, to confer a thousand benefits, by one act, and to render a direct favour to one, an indirect benefit to many. But, if sin should spread farther, God may justly be considered to have done enough, to shew his benevolence and mercy, his power and inclination to restore and forgive, and no farther redemption may be granted to all eternity. Let infidels who reject the mediation and sacrifice of Christ, consider this and tremble. For if the man “who despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done

despite unto the Spirit of grace?"—Heb. x. 28, 29.

With the miraculous conception of Christ, and his being born of a virgin, infidels rashly divert themselves, to their infinite hazard. But nothing can be more illogical and unphilosophical than their objections to this doctrine. For what is the ordinary mode in which we come into the world, but a mere appointment of an almighty Creator? The same power which has made this effectual, could give birth to our being in any other way which he might choose to adopt. And when infidels ridicule the story of a virgin being pregnant, as if it were immoral, asking what we should say of such a story, if it were told in our own times? we answer, let it be truly a parallel case, and no man of sense would say a word against it. Shew us that the thing was predicted, hundreds and even thousands of years before it happened; that the virgin was descended of that exact line, in which the person was to be born; that the town, as well as the kingdom, in which he was to arise was that which had been previously described; and that the time was now come in which the event must be fulfilled; and we will mark the child, watching to see whether he exhibit all the extraordinary powers with which he was to be clothed, so that his works should say to the nations, "Behold your God."

2. The fact must now be considered.

That there was an ancient prediction of the appearance of some extraordinary personage on earth, is undeniable. Even Tacitus, a heathen historian, mentions this, and not only says that the oracle declared the person was to spring up in the east; but that it was contained in the Jewish sacred books, and that the expectation of his appearance inflamed the courage of the Jews, in defending Jerusalem, against Titus. That there is such a prediction, in books that existed before the birth of

Christ, we have shewn, when adducing the Jews, as living witnesses to the truth of revelation. At the very time marked in these sacred books, which the Jews can prove we have not forged, an extraordinary person appeared ; and it was impossible that the prediction could afterwards have been fulfilled ; for the time predicted was past ; the Jews have lost their genealogies which should prove his descent in the royal line ; they are driven out of the country where he was to be born, and the temple in which he was to appear has been, for ages, levelled to the ground.

That the person who appeared, at the time, and in the place, and of the line, foretold by the Jewish prophets, was of extraordinary character, is admitted by infidels. Rousseau eloquently describes the Saviour, and pours contempt on those who compare him, even to the most exalted character of antiquity. Paine admits that there is every thing in Jesus which demands admiration. Tacitus declares, that Christ was the author of the religion of the Christians, and that it rose about the time of which the New Testament speaks. The Jews themselves have not ventured to deny that Jesus wrought miracles ; for all they can say against them is, that they were performed by magic.

Thus we may compare the predictions in the hands of the Jews, his enemies, with acknowledged facts which we think to be the fulfilment. “ Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light : they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy : they joy before thee according to the joy

in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood ; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."—Is. ix. 1—7 ; Is. liii. *passim*.

Christ's miracles, which shook creation, may well rouse our attention to the prophetic description of his person, as the mighty God.

When such a person speaks of himself, however lofty may be his claims, his works demand credit to his words. That his temper was mild, and modest, and unassuming, and the reverse of proud ambition, is confessed even by his modern foes. Yet he was by his ancient enemies charged with blasphemy, as having made himself equal with God. The most virtuous of men would be most remote from such an assumption. He suffered himself, however, to be condemned and crucified, for calling himself the Son of God, and confirming it by telling his judges, that he should come in the clouds of heaven to judge the world. He allowed himself to be called God, by Thomas, after the resurrection, when he had exchanged the vanities of the present world, for the realities of another. His apostles have described him, as God manifest in the flesh, and applied to him the various epithets which belong to Deity. His disciples have in all ages adored him

and owned him God. By the power of his name, they have pulled down idolatry, and are now so actively engaged in this pursuit, that, if things go on at this rate, for a few ages, all idols will be abolished, and Christ will be adored, as incarnate God, over the whole earth. Those who worship him are most jealous for the honour of one God, and the interests of virtue. Now it is utterly improbable that error should do the work of truth, and that one lie should destroy all others.

When, to all these evidences of facts, infidels oppose the abstract unreasonableness that Deity should become incarnate, we may remind them that a notion of the incarnation of Deity has spread over the world, even where the Christian religion was not known. The ancient Greeks and Romans, it is well known, had such a doctrine in their theology. The Hindoos have, for many ages, not only entertained the notion, but have made it a principal part of their religion. Whence, then, was it derived? If, from reason, what becomes of the assertion, that this doctrine is so utterly abhorrent to reason, as to be unworthy of reception? If, however, it was not derived from reason, what more probable origin can we assign to the prevalent notion, than tradition, derived from the revelation, "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that unto us, a child should be born, who should be called the mighty God?"

But there is one consideration worthy of special regard—that nothing is more difficult than to form an adequate idea of an incarnate God. This the Greeks, Romans, and Hindoos have shewn. For what are their incarnate deities, but vast giants, monsters of vice?

At this failure who can wonder? For what can be more arduous than to invent the history of an incarnate God? How far it surpasses the power of man we may learn, not only from the monstrous

stories of the Hindoo incarnations, which exhibit gods who married thirty millions of wives, and cut off as many enemies' heads; but even from the more elegant tales of the Greek and Roman poets, whose incarnate deities, though less monstrous, were little more divine.

Here, however, a person is introduced into the world as Immanuel, God with us. The story, thus commenced is adequately sustained, and terminates in a style worthy of the commencement. If the attempt to exhibit Deity in human flesh is singular, the execution is so completely unique, that all the abortive attempts seem to have been suffered, only to show, that the thing cannot approach to probability but when it actually possesses truth.

Another singularity in the Saviour's history is, that it exhibits absolute perfection of character. It is not often, that men dare even to attempt to sketch a thing so unknown to this world. "A faultless monster" has become a current phrase; because men were aware, that there is something unnatural in the picture that has been attempted to be given of a perfect human being. The heroes whom Homer and Virgil have exhibited are well known to be far enough from a virtuous perfection. But the writers of the Gospel have attempted the delineation of incarnate virtue, or holiness, and have succeeded. A man, born in an obscure town, in low circumstances, is exhibited to the public gaze, placed in the most critical positions; he is painted to the life, as spotless in innocence; and that innocence, not the tame insipid thing of which most would conceive, amounting to little more than inanity, but combined with an energy of character which braved the shock of earth and hell; yet that energy is shown to be connected with a correctness in which envy herself can detect no flaw, and a loveliness of benevolence which should fascinate the heart, even more than it astounds the intellect. How came the fishermen to



Galilee to conceive of such a character? How was it possible for them to exhibit it to the life, so that no man can read it without thinking and feeling that he has before him veritable biography?

Nor should it be forgotten, that the memoirs of Jesus Christ stand alone, in consequence of their exhibiting a person who, being about to be born, sent another person into the world, six months before, to announce his approach, and prepare the world to give him a due reception. Sprung from venerable parents, and ushered into the world with prodigies, this forerunner has no other business, but to say of his principal, "There he is: earth receive your King!" and then to retire; exclaiming, "he must increase, but I must decrease."

But, it may be asked, how the history of Christ may be proved to be true, by its being unique? The persons who wrote this story were incapable of inventing it. Except upon the supposition, that the events really occurred, and that the historians have done nothing more than relate facts, the whole narrative is utterly unaccountable. The writers were not literary men, accustomed to employ a commanding pen, in telling to the utmost advantage what a cultivated imagination had conceived. The Jews were not a literary people, like the Greeks, and the Evangelists were not even Jewish scribes. The men who wrote this account of Jesus and his religion have, as far as can be ascertained, written nothing else. Is it credible, that such men should have invented a story that surpasses the genius of all the literati, of all nations and ages? Can we suppose, that they conceived the idea of a person and history which leaves all invention, infinite leagues behind? Have they been able to sustain the daring conception of an incarnate God, and make him exactly what he ought to be? Could such deceivers delineate to the life perfect virtue?

That four persons should have undertaken to write

the same story, and should have executed it in the loose way of memoirs or anecdotes, rather than in the form of systematic biography, renders the idea of an invention still more incredible, and throws an air of ridicule over the suspicion. A single man may hatch a lovely fiction, if not such a one as the deist ascribes to the Evangelists; but that three others should join in the fraud, and, without any more preconcert than appears in the four Gospels, maintain a substantial harmony, is out of the reach of all rational supposition. To convince yourselves of this, my friends, go to our fishermen, at any sea-port, and find, if you can, *one* capable of writing from imagination, such a tale. The attempt to find one will satisfy you, that there never were four such, at one time, in any country under heaven.

III. The atonement of Christ is the last of those doctrines of revelation which I engaged to defend in this lecture.

That the Son of God took our nature, in order to accomplish an object which is stamped with importance sufficient to justify such an act of condescension, the Scriptures invariably testify. Our Saviour himself says, "He came to give his life a ransom for many." His forerunner, whose whole business on earth was, to usher in the great promised personage, and point him out to the notice of men, cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." This was, to the Jews, a sufficient indication, that Christ came to be a sacrificial victim; for they were accustomed to offer, every morning and evening, a lamb for a sin offering.

Isaiah had already taught Israel to hope that the Messiah would give his soul as an offering for sin, and that, when the Lord had laid on him the sin of many, and he had borne their iniquity, he should, by the knowledge of himself, justify many, and should make intercession for the transgressors.

This, I know, excites the ridicule of unbelievers. But the Scriptures have taught us to expect, that the preaching of the cross will be, to the Jews, a stumbling block, and, to the Greeks, foolishness. Yet, to those who are saved, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God. That a holy God must hate sin is a mere truism. It is, indeed, little else than an identical proposition, for to be holy, and to hate sin, are but the same thing. If, then, God hates sin, he must act as one that hates it. This he does, when he punishes the sinner. But, if he always act thus, there is nothing before us but eternal perdition.

Is there, then, no forgiveness for sin? Are we shut up in despair? The present forbearance and kindness shewn to a world of transgressors would indicate that there are designs of mercy in the divine breast. But justice must not be sacrificed to mercy, nor the character of God be ruined that wicked men may be saved. How are the conflicting interests to be harmonized?

God had, for thousands of years, given intimation of a mode which he had devised and adopted. Sacrifices for sin were instituted. The innocent died for the guilty. These sin offerings prevailed through the world, among Greeks, Romans, and barbarians, as well as among the Jews. Whence arose the custom, in which consisted almost all the religion of the most philosophical and polished nations? Was it the offspring of reason? If so, then the idea of a vicarious atonement is not so unreasonable as Deists would make us believe. But, if it sprung not from reason, some universal tradition, descending from a common stock, must have diffused the doctrine of atonement through all the families of the earth. This accords with the testimony of Scripture, that the first and second parents of our race, Adam and Noah, practised the rite of sacrifice.

But while nations destitute of revelation rested in

the mere external rite, and considered the victims and their blood as the food and drink of the gods, the Jews alone were taught by the Bible, that the numerous sacrifices they offered were merely significant signs of something more important, to which the affections of the soul should be turned. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak : O Israel, and I will testify against thee : I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds: for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains ; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee : for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows unto the Most High : and call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—Ps. l. 7—15. " For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered, year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered ? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure : then said I, lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst

pleasure therein ; which are offered by the law ; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."—Heb. x. 1—10.

When infidels reject this object of hope set before us in the Gospel, and pronounce it unworthy of reception, we ask, Can you find us a better ? Can you point us to any other hope ? If you reply, God will forgive sin, without any expression of his justice ; we answer, This is, in our opinion, more unreasonable than the doctrine of atonement. Justice is not like mercy, a voluntary affair ; for though a perfect being *may* forgive, he *must* be just. Of God's just punishment of sin we have abundant and tremendous examples, in this world ; of absolute pardon we have no conclusive proof, apart from revelation, and that declares all pardon to be a consequence and effect of the atonement of Christ. If you say a man may surely give up his rights, without being unjust ; we answer, that what a private person may do, is no proof of what is fit and just in a governor, who is intrusted with the welfare of the state. Judge Hale, whose private temper was eminently benevolent, justly said, " foolish mercy is real cruelty ; for mercy to the guilty, may be injustice to the innocent." And why do the Scriptures find in the breast of man their echo, when they represent the Deity as a king on a throne, swaying a sceptre, giving his law, and bearing not the sword in vain ; if God is to be ruled by the same considerations as guide the conduct of private persons ? Indisputable facts prove that God is not influenced by what may be called private feeling. It was the language of truth which the great poet put into the lips of Deity, saying of the transgressor,

“Die he, or justice must,  
Unless some other, able and as willing,  
Pay the rigid satisfaction—life for life.”

You say, perhaps, granting what is pleaded for, that the moral Governor must have regard to public consequences, and to the relation which one part of his conduct will bear to another; so that he must not, at one time, pardon sin in such a way as to give rise to the suspicion that it was mere arbitrary caprice which punished it, at another; yet might not the repentance of the sinner be a sufficient atonement to public justice? We answer, no: what atonement can repentance make? The voice of unbiassed reason, pronounced by ten thousand times ten thousand facts, proves that repentance makes no atonement. Perhaps there never was a murder perpetrated that was not instantly repented of. It is scarcely possible for a man to shed another's blood, without instantly abhorring his own deed; so that he would give the world, if he could undo what he has done. But what atonement can this make, either to the man who is hurried to the tribunal of his judge, or to society which is deprived of a member, and robbed of the security of life, which is one of its greatest blessings? Public justice demands blood for blood, even though the murderer should go weeping to the gibbet.

But the infidel contends, that the death of Christ, an innocent person, suffering for the guilty, violates all ideas of justice. We reply, it is a maxim in law, *volenti non fit injuria*; to him that is consenting no injustice is done. Christ went to the cross as a willing lamb to the altar, saying, “Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God.” “By which will we are sanctified, through the offering up of the body of Jesus once for all.” This public expression of God's opposition to sin, his declaration that,

without shedding of blood, there is no remission, serves to produce repentance, which must indeed precede all enjoyment of pardon. They who would exalt repentance into an atonement for sin, cannot shew how repentance itself is to be produced.

Those, and those only, who, by repenting of sin, at the foot of the cross, pronounce their condemnation on rebellion against God, and their approbation of the justice which punishes it, can enjoy the Christian blessing of justification. That those who have failed, should be restored to the favour of heaven, for the sake of one who has excelled in virtue, is surely an arrangement worthy of the moral Governor, who is, by office, as well as by character, the guardian of the interests of virtue in the universe. That none who have once failed in their obedience should be accepted, on the ground of their own obedience, or, in other words, be justified by works of law, is indeed mortifying to our pride, but it is equally honourable to God's justice; for to act otherwise, would be a practical lie, declaring that these persons had, themselves, fulfilled the condition of virtue, and kept its law, when in fact they had broken it.

There is, then, no way open for the forgiveness of sin and the acceptance of sinners, at the bar of God, but that which the atonement of Christ affords. To reject this, is to seal ourselves up in despair. Infidels, therefore, should at least hold their peace, till they can point out some other and more rational ground of hope than that which the cross of Christ presents. When they can do this, we will promise to take it into serious consideration. Till then, we may say of the cross of Christ :

“Should worlds conspire to drive me thence,  
Moveless and firm this heart should lie ;  
Resolved, (for that's my last defence)  
If I must perish, there to die.”

Beware, then, of opposing such a person, such a mediation, and such a sacrifice, as Jesus Christ



presents. The danger attendant on a course so desperate, no wise man will brave. To say the least, it may end in ruin. Those who receive this provision of mercy, as God's best gift, believe that the rejection must lead to perdition. The man "that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—Heb. x. 28—31.

For after we have, by our sins, offended our Creator and judge, if we despise the costly sacrifice made for our salvation, will not this be the finishing stroke of iniquity, that lets fall the last drop into the cup of wrath, to make it instantly run over?

He that came once, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, will come again, a second time, in the clouds of heaven, to judge the world. To stand before the omnipotent judge, whose mercy we have despised, will be found so intolerable, that rocks and hills will be invoked to fall and crush us, if they can but hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb.

Against this, there is no refuge but in timely flight to the throne of mercy, there to plead the sacrifice of him who died, the just for the unjust, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness, "by whose stripes we are healed." To him you should be encouraged to apply, by the consideration, that, however great may be the guilt of long and obstinately rejecting the Saviour, he came

to save sinners, even the chief. One who had blasphemed him, and compelled others to blaspheme, said, but "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—1 Tim. i. 16.

Christians, who profess their faith in his name, should never forget what is justly expected from them. You may reasonably expect infidels to say to you, If you believe all this which your creed contains, concerning a Divine Saviour, his philanthropic mediation. his atoning sacrifice of life, and the vicarious obedience consummated on the cross, what sort of persons ought you to be? If *we* believed all this, we would act according to it, and then we should be far better Christians than any we see. Now, though there is not a little gasconade in this, for infidels do not act according to *their* creed, which would keep them in the horrors of anxiety, and in a perpetual research after that which they say they cannot find in the Bible; yet there is so much reason in these remarks as should sting believers to the quick.

Who, then, can duly read the history of Jesus Christ, and not say, "This is the life of my sovereign master? At the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It is as much as my soul is worth to disobey his will. I must either make myself an outlaw in the universe, or bow my soul to the will of Him, whom every creature in all worlds, and especially every rational creature in this world, is bound to please. If he call, I have nothing to say, but, Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth. If he say, Go! though it should be to the ends of the earth, I have but one reply to make, Here I am, send me. If he demand my blood, I must, without hesitation, pour it out at

his feet, accounting it honoured, in being made a libation to his glory.

But, had we not been more prone to imitate what we should abhor than what we should admire, the world would have been full of imitations of Jesus Christ. For, instead of spending his life in the flames of destruction, and expiring like the smoke, he lived only to do good ; and his history terminates, not properly on the cross, but in that vision of glory which dazzles our eyes, as we gaze on a body, like our own, mounting on a cloudy chariot to the heaven of heavens.

In this milky way, the glittering track which he left behind him, we read, in letters of light, "This is the road to the skies!" Then let us start for that goal, exclaiming, "I follow, I follow, though not with equal steps. Religion, which was Jesus Christ's business on earth, I make my own. Every thing I touch I will, by sacred motives and uses, turn into the gold of the temple. Prayer shall be my breath, praise my bliss, benevolence my business, and heaven my home. I will aim, not to please myself, but to make others better and more blessed. I will, like Christ, seek not my own glory, but the honour of Him that sent me. If reviled and injured for this, let the meekness and patience of Jesus Christ be ever before my eyes ; and let this be my triumph, when, like my Lord, I can do a kindness to spiteful foes, and say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Never let me fancy I have understood or learned this history, till I have got it, in the noblest sense, by heart, and have been transformed from that melancholy contrast I once presented, and become entitled to say, "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, I am changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

## LECTURE IV.

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### THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE, OR THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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1 COR. xv. 10.

*“ But by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

THAT the Scriptures hold out to us a hope of enjoying an influence from our Maker, to restore us to virtue or holiness, and aid us in the path to heaven, is well known ; but that, out of this, a charge of folly, or falsehood, should have been brought against the Bible, might well excite astonishment, or even horror. For surely any candid man might say, “ well, if God should thus work upon the minds of his creatures, what harm would that do ? If this should be true, and revelation alone let us into the secret, we might, for the sake of this one discovery, wear the Bible in our bosom, as an inestimable jewel.”

But, strange and monstrous as such conduct must appear ; for the sake of this doctrine of divine grace, the Bible has been trodden under foot. The whole vocabulary of abuse has been exhausted, on a most benevolent tenet ; and mysticism, enthusiasm, fanaticism, delusion, hypocrisy, and cant, are but a few

of the hard names that have been applied to what ought to have been welcomed with rapturous joy. In a defence of the contents of revelation, you have then a right to expect that I should vindicate this doctrine from the attacks of the unbeliever.

Grace, signifies what is purely gratuitous, and is therefore frequently applied, in Scripture, to any free favour from God to man; but as the most important and most frequently repeated of the divine favours, consists in that influence which he exerts on our minds, this has obtained among Christians the title of grace, by emphasis.

As we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, though revealed to us in three personal modes of subsisting; and we have considered the Son of God, as offering a sacrifice for us to the Father's government; so the doctrine of divine grace brings us to observe, that the Holy Spirit is revealed in Scripture, as the agent who exerts a salutary, saving influence on the mind.

To all the charges that are brought against the revealed doctrine of the grace of the divine Spirit, I reply, by appealing to the condition of man—the character of God—the nature of religion—and the evidence of facts.

I. The condition of man requires the interposition of Divine grace.

That, man is in such a state as to need an influence from heaven, to restore him to virtue, to happiness, and to God, I might assume, as too notorious to require proof. But, knowing with whom we contend, I would not presume upon too ready admission, even of the most obvious and incontrovertible facts. While the Scriptures say of men, “their foolish heart is darkened,” even infidels exclaim, with a sneer, ignorance is the true original sin. They declaim aloud against men, as fools, for suffering themselves to be hood-winked by priests.

If the blame of this is laid upon the priests, the fact is still admitted. But we can defend the Bible, by saying, look around on those regions where it is not known ! Where there are no sacred books, and no Christian teachers, is there no ignorance ? Is there not enough to justify the charge brought by the prophets, against the whole world : “darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people ?” Is not the very controversy that is maintained between Christians and infidels, proof that there is darkness enough somewhere ? Either we who believe, must be strangely bewildered, by the professions of a book which others so contemptuously scorn ; or they who believe not, must be grossly blind, to reject that which, we think, shews its own divinity, as the sun is seen by its own light.

That our ignorance is accompanied by depravity of heart, infidels themselves proclaim. Their charge of priestcraft, contains one of the most grave accusations that can be brought against men. For, if we are wilfully deluding others, on questions which involve their present virtue, and their eternal safety, we are the vilest of criminals.

And who are so vehement as infidels, in their charges of oppression against governments, and of infamous conduct in those who bear the Christian name ? In fact, it is undeniable that there is something radically wrong in the temper and character of man. The universal and perpetual prevalence of that horrible thing, called war, in which men have delighted, and from which the world’s heroes have derived their glory, is quite sufficient to fix the brand of depravity on our race.

The doctrine of divine grace is, therefore, a necessary part of a system of salvation. As we have seen that guilt renders an atonement essential to all hope of pardon ; so we may shew, that from our depravity arises the necessity of divine grace to give that atonement effect. For, if the sacrifice of Christ

has put away sin from before the eyes of the moral governor; still it remains enthroned in our hearts, to induce us to despise that atonement, which is our only hope. Shall, then, this grand provision of mercy be rendered nugatory, for want of a disposition to avail ourselves of it?

May we not expect, from him who gave us Christ and his atonement, something more, to render his first favour effective, by a second, which shall dispose the hearts of some at least, to fly for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us? Could it be supposed, that such a sacrifice would be made to our salvation, as the cross of Christ exhibits, and no happy consequences be secured? Yet, what can be expected from the prevalent temper of men, but criminal indifference, or open rejection of the Saviour, unless some influence from heaven turn them to "look at him whom they pierced and mourn?"

I am aware, that this is not an argument that will operate on infidels who reject the atonement. But I am not now arguing *with* infidels, though contending against them. It is of importance to show to Christians, the evidence of their religion. Consistency, is one of the attributes of truth. For a system essentially defective in this quality, could not come from God. But when we see, that the same Scriptures which represent the Deity as providing an atonement for our guilt, exhibit him as exerting an influence to overcome our depravity, and to induce us to improve the grand mercy, so as to derive from it eternal salvation, we cannot but feel that this forms a grand moral whole, worthy of God to give, and of man to receive.

Nor should this be disregarded by the candid infidel. For what would he have said, if one part of our system had been inconsistent with another? Would he not have exclaimed, of what use is a medicine that is not applied? Is it not incumbent on the physician to see to the application of his



own prescriptions ; and if the patient is in a state that precludes the hope of *his* attending to this essential part of the curative process, must not others be provided, to do that for him which he will not do for himself ? You say to men, “ behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ; ” but you own that they are blind and careless. You bid them accept the reconciliation, but you confess that they are alienated from God. Is not this telling the deaf to hear, the dead to rise, and the lame to walk ?

We might reply, that the diseases of the mind are voluntary, and that man cannot shake off, with his virtue, his responsibility, nor, by losing his inclination to obey, deprive God of his right to command. Moral diseases are to be met by moral remedies ; and that instructions and exhortations are fit means to be employed on an alienated mind, the universal practice of mankind proves.

Still the infidel might say, something further is necessary. Man needs, not merely lessons, but capacities ; not only exhortations, but inclination to hearken. Who can look at the prevalent temper of men, and expect much benefit to result from mere human persuasions ? And, though it may be justly said, that men must take the consequence of their own disinclination and neglect ; can we suppose that the Creator would provide such a remedy for our guilt as Christ’s atonement is said to be, and make no provision to give it effect, by an influence on the human mind ? Such would infallibly have been the language of the more argumentative infidel, if revelation had contained no such doctrine as that of divine grace. The system of revelation, as it now stands, must therefore be admitted, to be at least, consistent with itself, and thus to be free from one charge which would have proved it false.

II. The character of God renders the doctrine of Divine grace credible.

For it is certainly worthy of a wise and holy and benevolent being, to sway the minds of his creatures for their good. In the beautiful language of an apostle, we must call God "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning." With such a description of Deity, how well does the following exhortation harmonise, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not. For every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above!" Did our Creator, at first, by granting us the light of reason, make us wiser than the beasts of the fields, and gave us understanding more than the fowls of heaven; and is it not worthy of him to restore us to the paths of wisdom and truth, when we had wandered and become vain in our imaginations? Is any thing more in harmony with the character of the original Illuminator of our species, the author of reason, than to shed a new ray on our minds, when he finds us bewildered in endless mazes? If we saw a person first light up a lamp, should we not think it quite natural for him to trim it, when it burned dimly?

The cure of our *depravity* is equally consonant with the character of a holy God. Is it at all improbable, that such a being would look, with pity, on a wayward, alienated creature, and touching his heart to new and virtuous sensibilities, bring him back to duty and to God? To find fault with this, must indicate something worse than derangement of intellect. Had we not a right to hope, that such a tenet would be welcomed, if not as a certain truth, at any rate, as a lovely fiction, that wanted nothing but evidence of its being a divine revelation, to ensure to it universal acceptance?

This is the most glorious prerogative of the first

of moral agents, the pattern and the source of virtue, to be able to influence the minds of others, and not only make them, in the first instance, virtuous, but restore them, when fallen into sin. It is the first solicitude, as it is the highest duty of a wise and affectionate parent, to recover a wandering child to piety and peace. But here we feel our weakness, and sigh over it from the centre of the soul. For, though we can give instructions, we cannot impart a mind to receive them. Our tenderest expostulations are lost upon a heart of stone. And what can we do to reach the core of the evil? We are powerless, with regard to direct and beneficial access to the mind itself, and all means operate upon it, according to its own character.

Is it not, then, consoling, to think that, just where we feel our most deplorable weakness, God displays his glorious might? If, with all our moral means, we can but address the senses, should we not exult that there is one who can enter into the centre of the soul, and touch these secret springs of nature, which give rise to all the movements of the man? Will it be denied, that he who created us must have a mode of influencing us, which no other being can command? Can he not new create us? This is exactly the language of Scripture; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are made new."

Can Deity itself possess a prerogative more glorious than this? What can exalt the eternal throne higher in the view of right reason? Is it not here that Jehovah reigns and triumphs over hearts, while all other beings are left at immeasurable distance? If this is the brightest jewel in the diadem of heaven's king; is it not fit that it should diffuse its lustre, by the exercise of this power over the spirits of men? Shall the only being, who has immediate access to the very nature of intelligent and accountable creatures, never put forth his might? What

constitutes the glory of this faculty, but its adaptation to produce the finest effects? Is not, then, the fitness of its being called into exercise, included in the very excellence, or essence of this faculty?

The operation of Divine grace on the human mind is analogous with the other works of God. All rational philosophy admits the influence of Deity in the physical world. "In him," as the Scriptures say, "we live and move and have our being." For the operations of nature, as they are called, are but what the Bible terms them, "the works of God, who worketh all in all." The Creator influences the various orders of beings according to their specific natures. Those mighty masses of matter that form the solar system he regulates by his wisdom and impels by his might. Even that lowest species of life which vegetables live must be acknowledged by all to be the result of a Divine influence; and animal life, whether in beasts, birds, fishes, or insects, is manifestly a peculiar production of a Divine agent. God is a fountain that is continually pouring forth streams of life.

And is the mind of man, the noblest product of power, to be left uninfluenced by the Divine energy! Is God to be allowed to operate on brute matter, or on mere animals, or vegetables, and then be forbidden to touch the human intellect or heart? Is not this like saying to a prince, you may move among the mob, to influence their opinions, or sway their passions; but you must never converse with the nobles, to gain them to your sentiments, or attach them to your cause?

Is not the mind of man, from which the infidel would exclude his God, the very portion of the universe which most needs his touch? This is the master wheel in the whole machinery of the world. Set this right, and all the rest will not be very far wrong. Leave this to go wrong, and the rest cannot be right. Was not this whole world made for

man? And why for man? For the sake of his body? What is there in this so superior to other bodies? Is it not the mind that gives man his decided precedence to brutes? But, because *this* is darkened and depraved, the whole creation is subject to vanity. And is not mind, the very portion of creation, that is, from its nature, liable to derangement? For, if our rational powers make us fit subjects for moral government, this implies a rule of motives addressed to the judgment, heart, and conscience, of a free agent, who is to be judged according to his conduct. If, then, this supposes a possibility of doing wrong, as well as right; this part of creation must be liable to derangement, while physical creation is but the operation of Deity, which must always be right. To exclude God's influence, therefore, from the moral world, is in the highest degree irrational.

We own that nature cannot go on without its author. We recognise his interference in the operations of husbandry. The farmer prepares the ground, and then casts in the precious seed. But there he must leave it; for he can now do nothing more. Yet, of what avail is all that he has done, unless a certain divine chemistry operate on the seed beneath the clods? "That which thou sowest is bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body, as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

Is this less true of the seed of morals, "the incorruptible seed of the word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever, by which souls are born again?" It is, therefore, the truest philosophy which is contained in the following passage of revelation: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plant-

eth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one : and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God : ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."—1 Cor. iii. 5—9. " And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect : yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought : but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory : which none of the princes of this world knew : for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit : for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit or man which is in him ? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For

who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”—1 Cor. ii. 4—16.

Never can we admit that the divine influence should be banished from the moral world. Rather than God should be excluded from all interference with the world of spirits, better were it that he should be prohibited from operating on the whole material system. For though nature would then cease to exist; let it cease, rather than God should cease to sway that part of creation which is more important than all the rest, and which most needs his holy control. If minds, when once created, were, from their very nature, necessarily abandoned to themselves without the possibility of divine influence, it had been better that no such order of creatures were called into being. For these would introduce an anomaly into the universe; so that it should be said, there is one species of creatures which the Deity must not influence in a way peculiar to its specific nature. In minerals, he maintains the law of crystallisation, of aggregation, and of gravity; in vegetables, he produces life and growth and fructification; and in animals, he so presides that “in him we live and have power of locomotion;” but over our minds he must not preside, to regulate their views, their volitions, or their actions! If any good could come from such an order of beings, God could not have the glory of it; but the fairest production of the universe, moral virtue, true holiness, and the highest kind of bliss would not owe their existence to God. How much more worthy of the name of philosophy is the doctrine of Scripture, that the fruits of the Spirit are “love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith! By the grace of God, I am what I am. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”—Romans xi. 36.

The interposition of God, to sway the minds of



men for their good, is analogous with what we know of other virtuous and benevolent beings. Good men invariably labour to make others good. To the utmost extent of their power, the pious instruct the ignorant, persuade the alienated, and reclaim the wicked. This universal effect of virtue is but an imitation of God, its pattern. The effect is like its cause. Having been influenced by another mind to become what they are, they say, with the apostle, in the text, "The grace bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly." It is true that the efforts of good men, to convert others, extend no farther than to the use of means; but this arises from the weakness of men, a sense of which leads them to call in divine strength, by fervent prayer. Where man fails, God interposes; and as all prayer is an appeal to his omnipotence, can we suppose that this appeal shall be made in vain?

But I am now conducted to a new class of arguments for the reality of divine influence.

III. The nature of religion pleads for the doctrine of divine grace.

My hearers may have observed, that I have frequently spoken of religion, or of holiness, under the name of virtue. This was not because I prefer the term, any more than many of my hearers may; for it is not Scriptural, since that word, where it occurs in the New Testament, means, not virtue in general, but moral courage, which is very nearly the sense intended to be conveyed by the correspondent word in the Greek and Latin classics. When Peter says, "add to your faith virtue;" he means courage in confessing your faith. But, in contending with others, we must often adopt their vocabulary, in order to be understood by them, and to meet their arguments. Virtue, then, being the term which the deistical writers prefer to the Scriptural word, holiness, I have employed it in this discourse. In pleading for the doctrine of divine grace, I would

shew that it is not inconsistent with the nature of virtue. Infidels of a higher order than those whom we usually meet, contend that it is contrary to the very nature of virtue, to suppose that it is the effect of a divine influence on the mind. They adopt the sentiment, if they do not quote the words of Seneca, "let the gods give me health and opportunities, and I will get virtue for myself." The impious pride of this language is enough to excite the suspicion of falsehood.

The nature of virtue is not destroyed by ascribing it to divine grace. For the essence of virtue lies not in its cause, but in the effect. In other words, its reality does not depend on the way in which it is produced, but on the character which it bears. When infidel philosophers assert that it is essential to all moral goodness, that it should be the result of voluntary effort in the virtuous being, they mistake a sophism for a truism. This is, in effect, to say that virtue must be the effect of virtue, or the thing must be the cause of itself. For why is it affirmed that virtue must be acquired by our own voluntary effort? Is it not because this voluntary effort is supposed to be virtuous, and that, without this, there would be no virtue in what is called by that name? But, if all present virtue must have sprung from previous virtue; then that previous virtue must have sprung from some virtue prior to it again; and so on, till we drive virtue out of the world, and render it impossible that any virtue should exist.

On this hypothesis, God cannot be virtuous. For he did not acquire his virtue by any voluntary effort, but possesses it by necessity of nature. If, then, the essence of virtue consists, not in its nature, but in its cause, how could the uncaused being possess virtue? What could be the cause of any thing in him who is at once eternal and unchangeable? As, then, it is manifest, that God's virtue cannot accord

with this notion, why should we not reject it as altogether false? For the value of virtue in the creatures lies in its being the image of God, and thus pleasant in his eyes, as the reflection of himself from the mirror in the good man's breast.

On the hypothesis of infidels, God could not have created man, or angels, upright, or, as the Scriptures say, in true holiness. For if there is no virtue but what the person acquires for himself, by his own voluntary effort, then God would have been under the necessity of forming moral agents, to whose perfection virtue is essential, in a state of imperfection, without virtue, and by consequence, vicious. See whither this doctrine would drive us. In every way, it would drive virtue out of the world.

But the essence of virtue lies in what it is, rather than in the source whence it came. If a man truly loves his Maker supremely, and his neighbour as himself, every rational, candid person will say, this is right and fit, he is just what he should be, or in other words, he is virtuous. Whatever tempers and actions are conformed to the law of God, the rule of virtue, are approved by just judges, as virtuous, and worthy of the esteem that is due to virtue. But, on the scheme which I am opposing, this might be all false. No one could give his approbation or esteem, to the most lovely tempers, or the most benevolent actions, till it was ascertained that these, when traced up to their source, were the effect of voluntary efforts. Thus, if we were asked, what is a person's character, we never could apply to him the commendations of virtue, till we had known the history of the formation of his character, and found that spontaneous effort was the spring of all that appeared good in him.

But as this sophism is frequently taken, even by superior, reflecting minds, for a truism, it is worth while to inquire into the source of the delusion. It doubtless arose from a universal, deeply rooted

conviction, that all virtue must be voluntary. Common sense agrees in this, that, whatever appearance of virtue there may be in any one's conduct, if he acts under compulsion, and his heart does not go with his conduct, there is in it no virtue. Hence has arisen the conviction, that liberty is essential to virtue. But this should be applied to the nature or essence, and not to the cause, or origin of virtue. Or, if we speak of cause at all, it must be the cause of the *conduct*, or *action*, not the cause of the virtuous disposition. But those who contend against the doctrines of Scripture, and especially that of the grace of God, are apt to assume a lofty tone, and talk big of virtue and philosophy, declaiming against the ignorance and fanaticism of Christians, when it will be found that logic, metaphysics, and all philosophy, as well as philology and history, are on the side of religion, or the Scriptures.

2. The doctrine of divine influence happily meets that discouragement which our fallen condition creates.

Nothing is more fatal to man, than to despair of attaining to virtue, and yet nothing is a more natural consequence of vice. For when men have indulged in evil ways, they feel themselves the slaves of their own habits, till, at last, the very body seems to plead for the continuance of sin, as essential almost to life. Drunkards frequently feel as if nothing but the intoxicating draught could keep them from sinking into the grave. The Scriptures, therefore, true to our nature, represent the sinner as saying, "There is no hope, no; I have loved idols, and after them I must go. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may those that have been accustomed to do evil learn to do good."

Now this desperation is most fatal; for it opposes to all reasoning and persuasion, an infernal sort of courage. But if you reject the doctrine of grace,

you throw down the chevaux de frise which the gospel places round the gulf of despair. Many have utterly abandoned all hope of mending themselves, and this makes them reckless and inattentive to the counsels of fellow men. "Help myself!" the profligate exclaims: "Alas! it is myself that needs to receive help, and therefore cannot give it." But when the voice of Scripture has been heard, declaring that God employs his mighty arm, to bring sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, even the reprobate has exclaimed, "Ah! well, if he please to do it, he can; but no other can." The very thought, that it is his pleasure to help, and that there is hope of recovery, gives a new turn to the thoughts of the desponding, and not only rekindles the love, but, with it, the fear of God, causing the man to say, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared: with thee there is plenteous redemption."

This doctrine is the grand stimulus to benevolent exertion, for the recovery of our fellow creatures to virtue and to God. Look around the world, and see who are engaged in active pursuits for the good of mankind? Who are labouring for the instruction of the ignorant, and the education of the rising generation? Who are visiting the prisons, to reclaim criminals? Who are forming societies for the promotion of temperance? Who are the founders, supporters, visitors, and managers of Penitentiaries for the recovery of prostitutes? Who visit and relieve the sick? Who quit their native land, to carry its blessings to savage cannibals? Who are struggling to break the chains of the oppressed African? Are they not, invariably, those who believe the doctrine of the grace of God—who recognise his influence on the minds of men—who look for his omnipotent benediction, saying, "Without thee we can do nothing?" "Be stedfast, immove-

able, always abounding in the work of the Lord," says the apostle, "inasmuch as ye know that your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain." Could you blot out the doctrine of grace from the minds of men, you would see the most efficient means of improving the world drop from the hands of its benefactors, as his money falls from the grasp of the miser, when death compels him to let go his hold.

For, with the doctrine of divine influence, we must abandon prayer, at least for mental and moral blessings, which are the chief objects of a good man's requests. The supplications of the most devotional are offered to God, most exclusively for spiritual blessings; and they who are most zealous for the honour of God and the good of mankind, are the persons who abound most in prayer, whence they derive their encouragement, in warring against the miseries and sins of the world. The denial of the influence of God on the mind, would destroy the motive which now animates to these supplications, which are so encouraging to the pious mind, and so stimulant to every good work.

This, I am aware, is an argument that must weigh most with Christians, who least need it; for I am sensible how much infidelity tends to depreciate prayer, and to banish it from the world. But, as the more sober, argumentative deists, have admitted the reasonableness and usefulness of prayer; so the most impious despisers of that duty often shew the force of truth, by flying to prayer, almost involuntarily, in moments of extremity. He that has lived blaspheming, has died crying for mercy. For there is a deep, unconquerable conviction in the mind, that the Deity is omnipresent, that he can hear our cries, and that, if a man would have help from heaven, he must ask it.

That doctrine, therefore, that cherishes prayer, inducing us to make it the refuge and solace of our lives, is the friend of man. In the hour of need, we

shall find the value of the assurance which revelation gives, that it is not in vain to call upon God, saying, "Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts before him, he is a refuge for you."

Nor is it less true, that a belief in the aids of divine grace promotes the humility which is so favourable to virtue. He who thinks he gets virtue for himself, as Seneca says, will thank himself for it. He will, as the Scriptures finely express it, "sacrifice to his own net, and burn incense to his own drag." He will exalt himself, and look down with disdain upon others. Now, every reflecting man must be sensible, that this temper is fatal to virtue. While self-confidence betrays us into a thousand ways that are any thing but virtuous, self-conceit is destructive to the benevolence of the heart, and the peace of the world.

But the doctrine of grace says to us, "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou which thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why shouldst thou glory as if thou receivedst it not?" "I laboured more abundantly than they all," says the apostle; "yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Look at all the most humble men in the world, and see if they are not the most virtuous. Mark the vain and conceited, and you will find that they fail in the most essential ingredients of virtue, and are tainted with the opposite elements of vice. If, then, virtue always goes accompanied with humility, and humility is cherished by prayer, and prayer is kept alive by the doctrine of divine grace; are we not thus taught the truth of a doctrine which is the life of all that is good?

Thus also we are led forward to the last step in the consideration of the subject, which is an appeal to fact.

IV. There are innumerable facts, which plead, in



various ways, for a belief in the influence of divine grace on the mind of man.

The best men, in all ages, have professed to experience this influence, and have ascribed to it all their moral worth. I know that infidels will now exclaim, "Poor weak-headed enthusiasts!" But we can adduce the first mathematicians, metaphysicians, and literati, that the world has known, who have professed to experience a divine influence on their hearts. Pascal is well known to have been a genius of the first order; so that Voltaire owned that, to his mortification, he never could make France think that Pascal was a fool. This man, by native genius, discovered what others find it sufficiently difficult to learn by the help of Euclid and the ablest living teachers. Descended from a father who was a skilful mathematician, but who designed to make his son a linguist, every thing that could allure him to mathematics was studiously concealed from the son. When about twelve years old, he asked what that science was? and being told it was that by which certain figures were drawn, to assist the mind in judging of their proportions and relations; he caught the idea, and mused over it. Retiring to a play room, he took a piece of charcoal, and made figures, contriving means of drawing a circle perfectly round, and a triangle, whose sides should be equal. But he knew not the names of the figures, and therefore called the circle, a round; and a line, a bar; making for himself definitions and axioms, till he went, from one step to another, as far as the 32nd proposition of the first book of Euclid. At this stage of his progress, his father came in, and found him so absorbed, that he was, for some time, ignorant that any one was looking at him. When asked what he was about, he said he was trying to find out something, which was, in fact, included in Euclid's 32nd proposition. The father having asked him how he came to think

of that? he replied, that he had been led to it by a previous step; to that, by another; till he traced up every thing to his *round* and his *bar*, and to the definitions and axioms which he had invented. Euclid's Elements were then given to him, and he understood them alone, without any explanations, though this study was the mere recreation of his leisure hours.

If Pascal was a catholic, he was so far from being a blind slave to priestcraft, that he wrote a work against the Jesuits, who were, at that time, lords of the ascendant in the church of Rome. The *Lettres Provinciales*, which Voltaire pronounced more entertaining than any comedy of Moliere, were the overthrow of the Jesuits. Pascal's Thoughts display the depth and accuracy of his mind, and prove to every candid mind, that their author held as high a rank among the intellectual as among the pious.

Yet the grace of God was the grand object of Pascal's attachment. He wrote in defence of this Christian tenet, and sought by supplication to heaven that aid of which he felt his need. His self-knowledge is manifest to every reader of his works, and his humble acknowledgement of divine grace attests his own conviction of what God had wrought upon a soul that was as much distinguished by faith and love, and every Christian grace, as by mathematical skill and metaphysical acumen.

Many men of great vigour and decision of mind, have been suddenly arrested, in the midst of a gay and guilty career, and turned into a course so opposite to all that formerly delighted them, as to demand the serious consideration of those who make man the theme of their study. The memoirs of Colonel Gardiner, written by Dr. Doddridge, I select as a printed specimen, worthy of special attention, on account both of the author and the theme. That the mind of Doddridge was disposed to cool research, rather than to enthusiastic impres-

sions, will be admitted by all who read his Lectures on Pneumatology. The previous character of Colonel Gardiner was such as to shew, that all his prejudices were contrary to the doctrine of grace. But that change, which he once would have deprecated, was wrought on him, by a power which he ever after owned and adored. The effect appeared in all his subsequent life, which was the reverse of what could rationally be called enthusiastic; for though it was eminently devout, it was equally grave, orderly, and beneficent. On one occasion, his friends, who had only known him as a gay rake, intended to rally him for his religion; but he anticipated them, by such an account of his change, and such a defence of his new views, principles, and conduct, that one of them said, "Let us call for another subject; for we thought to prove our friend cracked, and he is in good earnest going to prove that we are all stark mad."

There are numerous living witnesses of the efficacy of divine grace. Men who give the best evidence of intellectual power and self-research, can assure you, that they know the time when they were as destitute of divine grace as any infidel can now be, and that they can point to the period, when a new influence came over their minds, altering not only their views, but their inclinations. They can mark the progress of this work of grace, can shew how it transformed them into new creatures, and can ascertain the conformity between the scriptural account of illumination, conviction, regeneration, and sanctification, and that which has passed within their own breast, of which none but God and their own conscience are witnesses. Many of these persons are as decided enemies to enthusiasm, as they are diligent cultivators of self knowledge. President Edwards, who has been pronounced, by sceptical reviewers, the author of the most stupendous monument of metaphysical reasoning which the

human mind ever erected, has also written a treatise on religious affections, which probes the heart to the bottom, to shew the difference between the influence of divine grace and all enthusiastic impressions.

The facts which plead in behalf of a belief in the doctrine of grace, are not only numerous and striking, extending through all ages and all christian nations, but they are multiplying daily. The grace that accompanied the preaching of the gospel by the lips of apostles, is not withdrawn; but is still displaying itself, in striking changes, which confound and alarm infidels, as well as confirm and delight those who believe in Christ. Not a few of such as have laughed at the very mention of grace and conversion, have been made to feel that these are terms expressive, not of the delusions of the human mind, but of the operations of a power truly divine.

When Christians have gone to the most savage nations, to convert them to our faith, sceptics have mocked, and pronounced it a Quixotic adventure that would end in nothing but disappointment and disgrace. "The barbarians will never understand your dogmas," exclaimed the infidel, "and you will never induce them to abandon their paternal gods, and ancient superstitions, for your new creed." We replied, "We depend not on our own strength; or we should never have undertaken the task; but we trust to divine power, which is pledged to accompany the preaching of the cross. In that strength we go forth, saying, 'can any thing be too hard for the Lord?'" This was answered with a smile of contempt. "We go forth to victory," we said: no, "to defeat," replied the infidel. Well, what says the event? Is there a country so debased that the Christian religion has not transformed it from a desert to a paradise? But, when those who relied on divine grace succeeded, sceptics exclaimed, "these were savages, rude and ignorant, and easily

deceived." When we attempted the task, we were mocked for enthusiasts; because we trusted to divine grace to convert the savage: when he became more than a civilized man, we were told, "this was no proof of a divine power; for it is easy to convert a savage." At first, we are almost told, that God himself cannot convert the heathen; and at last, that any man could do it, without God.

But they who think it so easy, are bound to try to recover the savage part of our race, to the blessings of civilization. Where is the sincerity, or the benevolence of the infidels, if none of them go out on these philanthropic expeditions? What a triumph would it be for deists, if they could write a history of their missions to New Zealand, and tell how they turned these savages, from the worship of blocks, to pure theism, and from cannibalism, to mild and philanthropic habits! But we have seen, instead of this, a commission which had been appointed, by the government of the United States, for the civil improvement of the Indians of that Continent, return in despair, acknowledging their failure, and refusing any longer to expend the funds of the government, on what they deemed a hopeless project. At this moment, however, the display of divine power accompanying the gospel of grace, both in America itself, and in the missions which it has sent forth to distant nations, is compelling Christians to exclaim, with triumph, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Where man has failed, the grace of God has succeeded.

However irrational deists think the doctrine of a divine influence on the heart, the finest minds of antiquity have entertained the notion. It is well known, that ancient poetry is full of the doctrine of inspiration. Homer begins with invoking the aid of the deified muse, and all others have followed in the same track; so that it became a kind of axiom that every work was to be begun *συν Θεω*.

Upon this, Milton has improved, as one who enjoyed superior light.

“ Sing, heavenly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of chaos: or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa’s brook that flow’d  
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples, the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know’st; thou from the first  
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like, sat’st brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad’st it pregnant: what in me is dark,  
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to man.”

Whence have the ancients derived the practice? And why have all subsequent ages imitated this invocation of divine aid? Has reason taught man that he needs, and may hope to obtain, an influence from heaven? Then, it is not so irrational as some would make us believe. If reason was not the source of this expectation of a divine influence, has it been derived from tradition? What, then, gave rise to the tradition? Was it some fact? Has God excited an expectation in the minds of others, by what he has done on some favoured individuals? Christians believe that God inspired Moses with a knowledge of the divine will, and that the continued influence of heaven on the inhabitants of this earth, keeps alive the cheering hope of receiving from God, that better direction to our thoughts and affections which we so much need.

This notion is diffused wide as the bounds of earth. In the hour of danger and distress, all men, whether civilized or savage, sceptical or faithful, fly

for refuge to a power that can sway and sanctify, sustain and comfort, and deliver from dangers worse than death itself.

As to those who have a consciousness of having experienced a divine transforming influence, which has originally brought them into the path of virtue and of peace, and has ever since sustained and advanced them in the same blissful career; it is manifestly impossible to tear from their breasts a conviction of the reality of that to which they owe so much. It may be said by sceptics, that this is mere enthusiasm, or at best, but a private persuasion, to which others cannot be expected to yield. Were this admitted, as it might be, to a certain extent, it would still be hopeless to attempt to wrest this conviction from the breast of the experienced Christian. If blind men should say to those who talk of seeing, "this is a private persuasion, to which we cannot be expected to give credit;" those who see might reply, "if you remain sceptical, because we cannot impart to you our experience of sight, that is no reason why we should deny what we know to be true." And as blind people have something more than the mere testimony of society in general, to prove the reality of sight; for they have many affecting proofs of their own misfortune, and their inferiority to other men; so they who are destitute of all experience of Divine grace, have something more than the testimony of ten thousand living witnesses, to the reality of a Divine influence on the heart; for the delight which believers take in God, their devotion to his glory and the general good, and their patience in trials, with their triumph over death, might induce every candid man to say, "this is the finger of God."

It is now my duty to warn those who are disposed to sceptical principles, of the danger they incur, in rejecting the doctrine of Divine grace. It has been justly observed, that the chief ground of that



prejudice which men entertain against the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, is a want of just views of God's omnipotence, or his absolute power over the spirits of his creatures. "You do err," says our Redeemer, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Christ there speaks of the resurrection; but this is employed to illustrate the influence of grace on the heart. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Before this change is wrought, the soul of the most moral is but as a whited sepulchre. Profane men are but sepulchres unpainted. What can restore them to the beauty of holiness, but the power of God?

To insist largely on the omnipotence of Deity might seem superfluous. Yet the Psalmist says, "God has spoken once, yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongs to God." The unlimited power of our Creator, and our dependence upon him for all that is good in us, is what we need to be taught once and again. Nicodemus began by owning the power of God, manifested in Christ's miracles, saying, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." But, when Christ informed him, "that he must be born again of the Spirit of grace," he exclaimed, "how can these things be?" To induce us the more readily to receive the declarations of God's power in religion, it is joined with certain displays of his omnipotence in nature. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

Why should we leave the spirit of man out of the sphere of God's power? It is, indeed, lord in this lower world, but still a creature of God, and its lordship is limited, by its Creator, according to his will. He is justly styled in the volume of reve-

lation, the *Father of spirits* and the God of the spirits of all flesh. If you say, our souls are our own, and we may think as we please; this can be true, only as applied to fellow creatures. An atom of matter misplaced in our brain, or the slightest derangement of our bodies, may disturb the operation of our minds, and teach all around us, if not ourselves, in what a state of abject dependence on God we are continually held.

The Father of our spirits must have an equal control over them, even though they were not united to bodies; for that union is his work, and subject to his control. He must have power, not only over the intellect, but also over the affections and inclinations. All hearts are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of waters, whithersoever he will. He that planted in us the natural affections, the love of kindred, and of those things which are good for this life, can surely inspire us with the love of himself and of his friends, and make us hunger and thirst after righteousness. The best use we can make of the consideration of God's power, as displayed in the whole universe, is to learn what we may hope for from him, who can make our souls a theatre for the display of his moral might, his power to "save us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ."

As to the outcry of mystery, which is raised against this doctrine of divine influence on the heart, it is unworthy of a rational man to be swayed by mere clamour. The only sensible prejudice against mystery, is that which arises from an attempt to mystify what might be made plain. Mysteries we cannot escape. We are a mystery to ourselves; and every thing presented to our senses is a mystery, and, indeed, our senses themselves are mysteries; when we go beyond the vulgar, and penetrate farther than the surfaces of things.

He must be ignorant, indeed, who supposes that religion alone has mysteries. Creation must ever be, to the view of creatures, a mysterious act. The support of all things is by a power which is invisible, and so far mysterious, but yet must be admitted, unless we would cease to be rational. What mysteries are there in Providence ! All God's works are unsearchable. Yet they may be known, in part, so as to reward the diligent student of nature and providence. For we may know certain facts, when we cannot discover the mode of God's operation. The most imperfect knowledge of God and his nature, as displayed in his works, is more valuable than the greatest acquaintance we can have with the nature and operations of any other being. If there is a mixture of darkness, with all our knowledge of Deity ; even the darkness instructs as well as the light ; and both join to make us bow, and love and adore. It is profitable, at once to our humility and our piety, to know that God's arm, as well as his mind, " can do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think."

It is one thing, however, to be mysterious, and another to be unintelligible. God's power over the soul is secret, and in that sense mysterious, as Christ says, " the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The wind, however, is not an unintelligible thing ; for our knowledge of it is of great practical use. Nor is the influence of the Holy Spirit unintelligible. It is real knowledge ; if we are acquainted with this influence of God upon the mind ; if we understand its appropriate effects, and feel our obligations to their gracious Author.

But, perhaps, the greatest difficulty is yet behind. " If it is God's grace that makes us virtuous, or religious, or, in other words, real Christians, then

we are not to be blamed, if we do not believe and become pious." This is the language of thousands.

But reflect, what it is that revelation calls for. Nothing but what sound reason demands. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

And what is the nature of that inability to do all this, which makes us need the influence of grace? If Scripture represents us as weak, it declares also that this is a wilful weakness. "Ye will not come to me," says Christ, "that ye might have life." In other cases, we think no man excusable for wilful infirmities. The inability of a confirmed drunkard to abstain from ardent spirits, is not thought to be his excuse, but his crime.

There are many good things which no creature can do; but for the non-performance of these we are not blamed. We cannot work miracles, or relieve all the miserable. In this, however, we are innocent; for we may be strongly inclined to do the good. But if we are truly inclined to love God, we do love him; and if we are destitute of grace, we are willing to be so. It is easy to say, we desire the grace of God; and it is easy to deceive ourselves into the notion that this is true. If we really desired this grace, we should employ the means, just as men who long to be rich, employ their time and talents, and strength, for the attainment of their object. Men that sincerely desired the grace of God, would carefully abstain from every thing hostile to it; as those who desire to be well, abstain from poison, and from every thing that would destroy their health. Oh, that we could persuade you thus to shun every thing opposed to the divine will! Among these things, I would place, in the foremost rank, infidel associations and principles, which darken the mind, poison the heart, and "sear the conscience as with a hot iron." Oh, that I could

induce you to employ the means of grace, which God has instituted ! Of these, I would place, in the foremost rank, attention to the Bible, as the Word of God. Take it into your closet, read it in devotional retirement, and silence. Examine its contents, and seriously consider whether these are not its evidences of truth. Try it, by its effects on the heart and life. See how, a single day, spent under its influence, will operate in proof of its divinity. When you meet with a difficulty, compare one Scripture with another, as when you are embarrassed by any thing in nature, you seek a solution from other parts of the work of God. Above all things, pour out your supplications to him who giveth wisdom to them that lack it, and upbraideth them not.

For consider what encouragement the Bible gives to pray for divine influence ; “ And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? ” Luke xi. 9—13.

## LECTURE V.

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# ETERNAL REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS DEFENDED.

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MATTHEW xxv. 46.

*“ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.”*

As most of the objections to divine revelation spring from the alienated heart of fallen man, that doctrine which we are now to consider has encountered the severest opposition. This is the grand offence for which the Bible is rejected, that it cites us to the tribunal of our Maker, to whom every one of us must give an account of himself. “ Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest : for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself ; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shall escape the judgment of God ? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ; who will render to every man

according to his deeds : to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life : But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."—Rom. ii. 1—16.

In proportion as this revelation animates the hopes of the Christian, it alarms the fears of the infidel ; and as fear is the parent of hate, the severest things have been said, by Deists, of the Scripture doctrine of endless rewards and penalties. Men would indeed have no objection to be rewarded, even though they had not deserved it, while they object to punishment however well merited. I shall then, after considering the general doctrine of future retribution, enter on the special defence of endless penalties.

I. The defence of the general doctrine of future rewards and punishments.

As this constitutes the essence of moral philosophy, what would fill a volume cannot be fully discussed in a lecture, to which little more than an hour can be afforded.



But I entreat you to consider carefully, 1. that man was evidently formed for that state of probation of which future rewards and punishments form an essential sequel.

All who admit that there is a God, (and with such I now argue,) all who acknowledge that we are the product of an intelligent designing agent, must adopt what is termed the doctrine of final causes. They must own that certain means were employed, in order to obtain certain ends; as, for instance, that vegetables were formed for the use of animals, and that man was endued with reason, that he might be fitted to preside in this world, as lord of the irrational creatures. By this doctrine of final causes, as it is termed, we are conducted to the conclusion, that there is a God; because design proves a designer, in the same way that a painting shews a painter, and music tells of a musician.

By the same proofs by which we learn that there is a God, we are conducted to the conclusion, that there is a moral government. For as we learn that eyes were made to see, and ears to hear, and hands to work, and feet to walk, and mouths both to eat and speak; so we are taught that consciences were made to judge of moral character and conduct, and minds were intended, not merely to guide the machinery of the body, but to obey the parent mind, and form a part of a moral system, the grand drama, of which the physical creation is the mere stage. That moral powers were made for moral government, is as obvious as that physical beings were designed to be governed by physical laws. We are as sure that he who adapted our nature to a government by moral law, and to a state of probation with its consequent rewards and punishments, designed us for such an arrangement, as we are sure that he who made eyes for light, and light for eyes, designed the one for the other. This way of stating the argument, may be thought rather strong than true.

For it may be said, that we have the evidence of fact for the use of our senses, and have not the same evidence of moral government. To this, I reply, that we have more of this evidence of fact for moral government than is generally noticed; and whatever we have, in either case, does not properly belong to the doctrine of final causes. The *adaptation* of means to ends is all that proves a final cause. If men choose to shut their eyes, or to shut out the light, these two parts of creation are still so fitted to each other, and to the production of sight, that they prove a designing cause. If men had never learned to eat eggs; these are still fit for human food, and are proofs of the Creator's care to make the inferior creatures subservient to our support. Whatever practical neglect, therefore, there may be of *moral* government, and however men may more generally use their *physical* powers for their destined ends, the doctrine of final causes is an equally valid proof of the *design* of him who gave us our moral faculties.

Our Creator has endowed us with reason, to know him and our relation to him; he has given us a moral sense; he has enabled us to exercise a power over ourselves, by which conscience is the eye of the mind, more wonderful than that of the body; for, while the bodily organ can look at any thing but itself, our mental sight turns inwards, and surveys our own moral features. A creature thus constituted, is as manifestly formed for a moral government of motives, and fitted to be cited to the tribunal of his Maker, as man is created to go erect, and to procure food and raiment by the skill and labour of his hands.

2. There is a general and invincible impression that man is placed under a moral government, and is amenable to the tribunal of God. I am not unacquainted with the contemptuous despatch with which sceptics reject the arguments drawn from

general belief, or how flippantly we are told of the numerous fables that are commonly believed to be true. But I know too, that common sense is, at last, generally found to be good sense. For, when those things which commend themselves to all mankind, are stripped of what is adventitious, or does not really belong to them; it is found that these universal notions arise from some essential principles of our nature, which cannot be renounced, without the abandonment of reason itself. In fact, these are the things which distinguish between the sane and the mad.

That there is a general, and as I may call it, a universal impression of an essential difference between moral good and evil, whence spring virtue and vice, merit and guilt; and that man is supposed to be accountable to a higher tribunal than that of his fellow creatures, and so destined to a future state of rewards and punishments, is undeniable. This may be ascribed to the influence of revelation. But it is notorious that the same conviction prevails, where the Scriptures are not known. Ancients and moderns, civilised nations and savages, have felt the force of this persuasion. Whence has it arisen? From reason? The reason of the thing must have been, at once very obvious and very powerful, to have enabled it to survive the opposition which it has had to encounter. Depraved inclinations have made men wish the doctrine of future rewards and punishments false. Here, if ever, reason has had to contend with passion, and there have not been wanting men of powerful minds and depraved hearts, who have laboured to blot out this notion from the mind. But, if infidels deny that the prevalence of the persuasion springs from the force of reason, to what will they ascribe the belief of a moral government and a future judgment? Christians think that it is the offspring of revelation, and that reason is but the foster parent and nurse. The communication

from our Maker to the first parent of our race was virtually imparted to the whole family of man; and when Noah became a second stock, whence sprang all nations, the revelation which God made to him was handed down to his descendants, and has diffused through the world an expectation of the hour when we must give account of ourselves to God. Still, nothing but the manifest reasonableness of that notion has enabled it to maintain its existence and its influence, in spite of the torrent of vice that has laboured to sweep away that troubler from the earth.

But where men have cast off revelation, and attempted to put out this light, which discovers the final tribunal, they have never been able to succeed to their satisfaction. Much of their embittered hostility to the Bible has sprung from the trouble it has given them, and the power it possesses to make them start at the prospect of the judgment seat. They hope that every effort they make, to prove the Bible false, will be a step towards that torpor of conscience, to which they aspire as their Elysium. But they find that theirs is a fool's Paradise, the limbo of vanity, that is perpetually mocking their hopes. If, for a moment, they seem to succeed, it is only to add disappointment to torture; for the victory is perpetually snatched from their grasp. Conscience wakes up again, as a giant, fresher for repose, and new efforts serve but to usher in new defeats, more overwhelming than the last.

For they who war in this cause fight against themselves. Every now and then, they catch themselves in the act of flying for refuge, to the very notion against which they contended as their deadliest foe. When, under oppression, they find might overcoming right, they are surprised and mortified, to feel that their mind spontaneously turns towards a supreme tribunal, where the power of God shall judge between man and man. Where is he who

never appeals from earth to heaven, from ignorance, partiality, and injustice, to omniscience, rectitude, and almighty vengeance? And though the wicked attempt to make their Creator a partner in their quarrels, and an accomplice in wrong; all feel that it is a wise and virtuous principle that takes refuge in infinite righteousness, against the overbearing selfishness of a petty tyrant. The wicked curse each other, and invoke that vengeance which they cannot execute for themselves; but the righteous say, "Arise, O God, and plead thine own cause." Nor can the grateful man, whatever may be his creed, help invoking the interposition of heaven, in behalf of the benefactor whose kindness he cannot repay.

3. For the doctrine of a moral government requires a future state of rewards and punishments, more perfect than any that are to be found in the present life.

It has been contended that virtue is its own reward, and vice its own punishment. This is the truth, but not the whole truth. To be good, is to be happy; to be wicked, is to be wretched. But this is so far from being a reason against future retributions, that it is an argument in their favour. The present pains and pleasures of vice and virtue are not all that is expected, but are merely the first fruits, which are pledges of the future harvest, the commencement of what is to be carried to perfection in eternity.

That a complete and sufficient retribution is not given in this life, is manifest, from the fact that I am now arguing in favour of retributive justice, against those who deny it. Many persist in this denial, to the last. While living in infidel rejection of the doctrine of rewards and punishments, men are suddenly snatched off, by death, and removed from all the retribution that occurs in this life. Now can that be a sufficient manifestation of the moral

government of God, of his love of virtue and hatred of vice, which is so little felt as to be actually denied to have any existence at all? Those who deny it, are the offenders on whom it behoves the moral governor to make his justice manifest. Can it be worthy of the righteous and almighty King, to leave the greatest criminals to so slight a punishment that they deny his right, or his power, or his will, to punish at all? It is true, that many of these inwardly feel more than they choose to confess; but the ends of moral government require a retribution that cannot be denied.

The pious, indeed, acknowledge, with humble gratitude, that they have, in their religion, strong consolation under every trial, and that they have no claim upon their Maker, for the services they perform, or the sufferings they endure. But whence arises their consolation? An Apostle said to some ancient sufferers for righteousness sake, "ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The righteous look forward, with intense interest, to that future world where they believe they shall enjoy the maturity of virtue and the perfection of its bliss. They say, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Their minds have been elevated to the glorious expectation of a perfection of virtue, which they cannot find here, and of an enjoyment of God which shall endure to eternity. To this hope they owe much of that pleasure which has given rise to the saying, that virtue is its own reward. But, if this hope could prove false, even the present rewards of virtue will have sprung from the belief of a lie.

In this life, every thing begins to decay, as soon as it comes to maturity. The powers of man have scarcely expanded to full view, and acquired their utmost vigour, ere the infirmities of age come on; and,

as soon as we have learned to live, we begin to die. What is this, but the voice of the Creator, teaching us that we are here in a probationary state, sent to school to learn what we are called into eternity to practise? With regard to vice, who does not see, that, when it is become consummate and incorrigible, and the offender most deserves punishment, he is snatched from this life, away from all the retribution which it contains? Can we suppose that he will be suffered thus to escape punishment; and that retribution will fail, just where it should exert its force? And can we imagine that virtue perishes, at the very point of perfection, for which it pants, and suffers, and toils? Can we believe that he who infinitely loves it, will suffer it to expire at the very moment that it becomes worthy to be perpetuated, when, having thrown off its dross, it is fitted to shine in everlasting lustre?

So inconsistent with the nature, and attributes, and government of God, is the denial of future rewards and punishments, that it must be allied with secret, if not avowed atheism. When a sinner has carried his rebellion against heaven to the utmost pitch, and has called for the vengeance of God, he lays violent hands upon himself. If there be no future state of retribution, he has thus set heaven at defiance and slipped out of the way of justice, mocking God with impunity. Against this, there is no security, but in the judgment to come. It the more concerns a just and mighty Ruler to call these sinners to his bar, because they regard suicide as their refuge and their privilege, contending that, when their conduct has made life wretched, they have a right to rid themselves of what has become a burden. But "be not deceived, God is not thus to be mocked. Whatsoever a man has sown in this life, that shall he reap in another. He that has sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.



But he that has sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Thus the truth of our doctrine is proved, by the effects of its opposite. Among the proofs of a moral government pervading the universe, are the usefulness of truth, and the pernicious effects of error. Let a man believe that knowledge is an evil, and ignorance a blessing, and what but wickedness and misery will result from that fallacy? In proportion as the church of Rome has maintained that notion, she has suffered from it; for other Christians have risen above her, and found that knowledge is power. Thus are seen the good effects of a just conviction of the superiority of knowledge, and it becomes manifest that mental, like material light, is a means of usefulness and a source of bliss. If a man adopt the false notion, that truth and honesty are useless incumbrances, and that deceit and knavery are the best instruments for the attainment of pleasure and of power, what unexpected pains and penalties will follow? When he feels himself most sure of success in his villanous career, he finds himself mortified by being entangled in his own net.

Mark, then, the effects of the opposite doctrines, that which maintains and that which denies a future state of punishments and rewards. All the motives to truth, honesty, benevolence, and every other virtue, acquire an infinity of force by the belief of the eternity of retribution; for whatever is eternal, is, in virtue of its duration, infinite. All the force of infinity is thus given to virtue. And does not fact prove, that all the most mighty and decisive displays of virtue, have been furnished by the fostering influence of a belief in a boundless futurity of pleasure or of pain? The Howards have been Christians. By that rule, then, which we have found universal, that the effects of truth are good, we must conclude that the existence of a future state

is proved true by the effects. The fruits shew on what tree they grow.

Now, take the opposite side of the question, and see the effects that follow from a denial of a future state of retribution. The motives to virtue are then enfeebled, just in proportion as they are fortified by the prospect of futurity. Virtue needs all the force of eternity, to enable her to maintain her ground against the violence of the passions, and the perpetual pressure of sensual excitements. But this is no mere theory : let facts speak. Is not man, when released from the restraints of a belief in a future judgment, the slave of his lusts ? His language, then, is, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." What were the scenes exhibited in France, during the triumph of infidelity, when death was pronounced an eternal sleep ? Then, monsters in human shape quaffed their brothers' blood, as the most delightfully intoxicating libation. Life will be a perpetual debauch, when death is supposed to be an eternal sleep.

And what will be the effects of the doctrine we oppose, with regard to that horrible thing called suicide, or, in plainer words, self murder ? If a man, believing a future state, expects to pass, at death, into the presence of his judge, and to spend a whole eternity in pain or pleasure, will he not, in the hour of despondency, be restrained from laying violent hands on himself, lest he should go from present miseries to those which are so much greater, that these, when compared with those, are nothing ? But, if he denies a future sentient state, what can keep him from saying, " A pistol, or a razor, or a halter, prussic acid, or arsenic, are a short and easy method of escape from life, that is become an intolerable burden ?" Thus he who deserves to live, that he may suffer for his crimes, supposes that he always holds in his own hands the means of defeating the justice that pursues him, and escaping be-

yond the reach of omnipresence and the blow of omnipotence. Is this a mere hypothesis? Is it a theoretic evil of infidelity, which is never found to have actual existence? Is it even of rare occurrence? Or is it only resorted to, in a moment of desperation, when previous principles lose their influence? Is it not the avowed doctrine of the despisers of revelation? Do they not, with unblushing front, declare, that this is the precious privilege of their creed, that it allows man to enjoy the prospect, as well as the delights, of self murder? Does not infidelity thus plunge its wretched dupes beyond the point whence they might escape its tiger claws? They who might have been induced, by the prospect of futurity, to pause, to repent, to turn to God, and to accept his mercy, have been, by the murderous creed of infidels, plunged into a fiery gulf, whence there is no redemption.

Now apply, once more, the rule which we have found to be so universal and so sure. The effects of truth are good, and nothing but evil is the result of falsehood. Is there a greater enemy to man, than that which puts into his hand the fatal pistol, or mingles for him the cup of poison, inducing the cowardly wretch to refuse to face the consequences of his own conduct, and to leave a wife and children, to struggle alone with that lot which he should have taught and helped them to endure? Is not that doctrine which furnishes all the most mighty motives to patience and fortitude, the friend of man, who may thus be spared to see the tide turned, from despair to hope, from misery to bliss, and thus from the loathing of life to the enjoyment of its highest pleasures, in usefulness, piety, and peace? "Verily, then, there is a reward for the righteous, for there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

II. The particular consideration of future punishment is, however, necessary to the full defence of divine revelation.

For those who would gaze, with pleasure, on the bright side of the picture, and easily concede to us, that there may be future and eternal rewards, cannot bear to look at the dark side, or to admit that the wicked will be punished, especially without hope of termination to their pains. The full force of infidels, therefore, is directed against the endless *punishments* of the wicked; and though they usually wield no other weapons than the straw lance of sneers and empty jokes, making themselves merry with their own perdition, yet, as they sometimes pretend to fight with arguments, with these I will meet them.

The certainty of future punishments must first be shewn, and then their eternity.

That there certainly will be a state of punishment for the wicked, beyond this life, may be proved by arguments, more numerous than can be here adduced. I select those which are, perhaps, not the strongest, but which are most suited to those against whom I contend.

The essence of the doctrine of future punishments, is contained in that of rewards.

If a man say, I like the strong lights of a picture, but not its shades; you would ask him, how he could have the one without the other. Should he praise mountain scenery, but declaim against vales and glens; would you not say, Can there be a mountain without a valley? If men are reconciled to the doctrine of future rewards, but are horrified at the prospect of punishment; we beg them to look a little closer at the subject, to dive deeper into the nature of things, and consider whether that which they condemn is not included in that which they approve.

Suppose the righteous to be rewarded, with all that exquisite and eternal bliss which the Scriptures promise, will not the wicked be punished, by the loss of that which makes others so blessed? Will it not

be an exquisite and unutterable torment, to know that we have missed what many have obtained? When, therefore, the Saviour said, that the rich man in hell, lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, an ancient father exclaimed, "heaven burns him more than hell." The sight of a heaven which he had lost, was more tormenting than the sense of the hell which he endured. Could the righteous then be rewarded, and the wicked not punished? Must not the latter be punished, at least negatively, which is often felt to be a positive torment?

But you say, Could not *all* be rewarded? Again I entreat you to consider your own question, a little more closely, and ask your own judgment and conscience, whether you are not uttering words without ideas? Is not this talking without arguing? Infidels, indeed, seem to try if those who cannot be argued down, may not be talked down; but I do not consider my present audience to be of that temper. Say, then, whether that can be any reward to virtue which is given equally to vice? When we speak of the rewards of industry, we mean the abundance and the comfort, and the health, and the respectability, which this virtue produces. But if all these effects followed equally from sloth, how could they be called the rewards of industry? Can, then, any rational man speak of rewards for virtue, unless he mean to say, that, of these the vicious are amerced?

And who does not feel that common sense spurns the notion of the same rewards to those who hate God, as to those who love him? Would not this exhibit the moral governor equally well pleased with the one and the other? And is not this a contradiction? Are we not thus conducted to the conclusion, that, to suppose all to be rewarded, is to overturn the whole doctrine of moral government, which even deists profess to admit?

Besides, we may ask, Is there any thing in the present conduct of the governor of the world, that should lead us to conclude, that he will reward all alike? In the virtues which regard the present life, is there not a present reward, which is strikingly contrasted with the consequences of the opposite vices? Look at sobriety, and see whether its recompense is equally bestowed on the drunkard? Has the miser the same pleasure as the liberal man enjoys? What reason have we, then, from any thing we see in God's conduct, to conclude that he will, in another world, deal alike with all opposite characters? Is there not the highest wisdom, in the language of Abraham? "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—Gen. xviii. 25.

But the objection to future punishments takes another turn, and says, May not the wicked be placed in an inferior state of being, a kind of negative condition, that has in it neither rewards nor punishments? To this, we reply, by asking another question? Is there any such state to be conceived of, for such a creature as man? Must he not either enjoy, or suffer? Is not his being so constituted that it must be a source either of pleasure or of pain? Does not the one begin where the other ends? Are you not then attempting to conceive of an impossibility? In fact, would not a truly negative state of being, be as truly no being at all for man? The mere existence of a body and a mind, without ideas and without sensations, would be not a man, but a new kind of statue.

This will be still further manifest, if you reflect, that this negative state must be known to be such, by the man, if he be worthy of that name. He must, then, be sensible that he has fallen short of the state of positive, not to say exquisite enjoyment,

and sunken into a sort of paralysis, or apoplexy, in which the exercise of his sensitive powers is suspended. And, if he retain his rational nature, he must know for what he is reduced to a kind of living corpse. If, then, he know that this is the penalty of his crimes, and that, while he is worse than half dead, others are all life, immortality, vigour, and bliss, must he not be tormented by the thought? Turn which way we will, we find that the doctrine of future punishments is included in that of rewards, as mountains depend on vales.

But now comes the grand alternative: Could not the wicked be annihilated? Ah! I know, this is the infidel's forlorn hope. But I would now entreat you to think of yourself, and your doctrine. Of yourself. Are you the person that began by admitting a future state, the immortality of the soul, and endless retributions? And are you come to deny the immortality of one great portion of our race. The man who professes to believe himself immortal, without the aid of revelation, soon finds that he has but a feeble hold of his own professed creed. You shudder at future punishments, and would retain nothing but rewards; but these you find imply the former, except you choose to give the wicked a leap—whither? Into the gulf of annihilation. Well, then, you exclaim, let him be annihilated. Now what becomes of your belief of the immortality of the soul? So much for the consistency of deism!

But look next at your doctrine—Annihilation! Is this the precious alternative which you propose, instead of future punishment? What, then, is there no punishment in this? Is it nothing for such a creature as man to be blotted out of being? Would you feel it a trial, to be deprived of the sight of your eyes, of the hearing of your ears, of your faculty of taste, smell, or touch, of your reasoning powers, and social affections; and do you not



shudder at the prospect of being deprived of *all* these, at a stroke, and being reduced to the impossibility of ever having them restored? Can you say, "when others shall be enjoying an immortality of bliss, I shall be erased from the page of existence, as a foul blot, offensive to the Creator, and injurious to the universe;" without shrinking from yourself, and almost loathing, or even execrating your own image? But we have been conducted, again, to the conclusion, that punishment, in some sense, must be included in the idea of future rewards, or even of moral government.

But a farther proof of future punishments may be derived from the character of God.

If nothing more were done to punish the wicked, than that which arises out of their exclusion from the rewards of the just, this would indeed be severe; but would it be a sufficient expression of God's love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity? Might it not be asked, what proof does this give of God's hating sin? How know we, that the privations of the wicked are not the mere result of God's having a positive attachment to virtue, and being indifferent to vice? If, then, God has instituted a system of moral government, to shew his own character, and if a part of this includes positive rewards to the righteous, is it not requisite that there should be some positive expression of his hatred to iniquity?

If we contemplate God's moral character as displayed in this world, we see, besides the loss of that good which virtue confers, real, positive misery inflicted on vice. Civil government, instituted for the good of society, is a part of God's moral government; and here we behold inflicted both by God and man, punishments which do not consist in the mere loss of that good which the virtuous members of society enjoy. There are prisons, and chains, and gibbets.

for the punishment of evil-doers ; for the magistrate “ beareth not the sword in vain.”

And does not all positive, energetic character require, in addition to the love of virtue, the hatred of crime ? That is but a negative benevolence which inspires no detestation of cruelty : and that is scarcely chastity at all that does not detest lewdness. The arm that protects piety, should also crush sin ; and the energy of God’s character seems to require the one as much as the other.

For, in fact, the intensity of God’s opposition to evil, is but the force of his attachment to the good of the universe, operating to oppose all that is the creatures’ bane. The punishments of a good civil government are the result of faithfulness to society, and of a determination that its virtuous members shall not be deprived of the peace and security which are their due. Nor is the punishment of sin less required, by the office which the Deity holds, as conservator of the universe, and guardian of the just.

There are some considerations that show the punishment of sin, to be even more necessary than the reward of righteousness. Virtue is but simple duty, which is demanded, by gratitude, for favours already received ; for who has first given to God ? Is he not always beforehand with his creatures ? The returns we owe, are never perfectly paid, so that we are far enough from making God our debtor ; and what are called the rewards of virtue, are well said by the apostle, to be “ rewards of grace, not of debt.” But sin is gratuitous mischief, in violation of all obligation, and in spiteful opposition to rightful authority and sovereign grace. If, then, virtue receives, not merely exemption from the evils of sin, but positive expressions of our Maker’s favour ; vice should be punished, in addition to the loss of heaven, with some positive infliction of misery, by the active power of eternal justice.

Is not this view of what is right confirmed by the testimony of fact ?

We stand upon the ruins of a guilty world, destroyed by the just indignation of God against sin. The antediluvian race were not merely deprived of that favour shewn to Enoch, who walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death ; but they were smitten with this tremendous sentence ; “ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me ; for the earth is filled with violence through them ; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”—Gen. vi. 13. The marks of this judgment are left upon the earth ; so that the present generation cannot dig far into the crust of the globe, without meeting with phenomena which cry aloud, “ behold the vengeance of God against sin.” The gloomy lake of Sodom is a memorial, of which an apostle thus speaks, “ Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Many and striking are the judgments which God has, in all ages, poured upon the wicked. The torments of conscience which they have endured, even when exalted, by riches and power, above the fear of man, have proclaimed aloud, “ Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

On the approach of death, when this world was receding, and with it all temporal retribution, what horrors have seized the souls of sinners ! The infidel, I know, will say, “ this is merely the result of their own childish weakness, and of the superstitious fears which priests have inspired.” To this we have two replies to make. The first is, that some who have shown themselves as brave spirits as any now living, and have despised those fears through life, have, at last, been seized by them, and become as abject slaves, as any of those at whom they once

mocked. What security can the scoffing infidel have against the same sad reverse? My second reply is, that ascribe it to what cause you may, the fact is the same. Upon this, therefore, we are no less than infidels at liberty to reason.

*You* say, the terrors of the dying sinner are the effect of childish weakness and superstitious fear; *we* think, it is an effect of God's justice, and a foretaste of the future punishments of sin. Say of it what *you* may, *we* cannot help seeing the shivering of the arrested criminal, who catches the first glimpse of that dread tribunal to which he is dragged, by an almighty, though invisible hand.

2. But the special defence of the *eternity* of future punishments, now demands our most serious regard.

I might have included eternal *rewards*, but to these no objections are urged; and it were superfluous to defend what is not attacked. I proceed, therefore, to observe that,

The eternity of punishment is essentially connected with that of rewards. This connection is asserted by the volume of revelation, as is perfectly obvious in the language of the text. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." It may, perhaps, strike the mere English reader, that there is a difference in the terms which express the duration of the rewards and of the punishment; and, though most would see that these are both expressive of perpetuity, some might imagine that a difference is intended to be expressed. Our translators, however, seem to have been here unduly studious of euphony, or elegance; for in the original, the same adjective, *αιωνιον*, is applied, both to the happy life of the righteous, and to the miserable punishment of the wicked. The translation, therefore, should have adopted, in both cases, either the epithet eternal, or everlasting.

What is thus associated, in the volume of revelation, is equally united in the nature of things. For it will be found, on the closest investigation, that the doctrines which the Scripture reveals, even when not discoverable by the unassisted light of reason, are the necessary result of eternal truth. If it is right and fit for the moral governor of the world, to give an everlasting expression of his approbation of virtue, by what process of fair reasoning can it be shown to be less proper, to give an equally durable proof of his hatred of sin? Should we not, in all reason and prudence, suspect, that, when we admit the one, and deny the other, we are influenced by something different from cool judgment, that is to say, we are biassed by interested feeling?

If you reply, that the eternal rewards of virtue are bestowed by the moral governor, not merely to give pleasure to the happy individual, but to answer the higher end of teaching a beneficial lesson to the whole universe, this is readily admitted. But, will not the endless punishment of the wicked afford a salutary warning to the universe? Is it not equitable that those who have been the bane of society, by opposing the just claims of the sovereign King; should be compelled to pay the penalty of promoting his honours and the general good, by their perpetual misery? What they should voluntarily have accomplished, by their actions, they may be compelled to effect, by their sufferings.

Of this, have they not been fairly warned? For, wherever the doctrine of future rewards has gone, that of future punishments has gone with it; and where the eternity of the one is admitted, that of the other has been usually believed. Is not this notorious, where the Scriptures are allowed to dictate men's creed? In the minds of the great mass of mankind, it is impossible to separate the one from the other. Now, not to assume the truth of

this doctrine, which is the thing to be proved ; may we not affirm, that, if the punishment of the wicked should be proved to be eternal, they will have been fairly warned ?

That the most awful warnings of the future consequences of sin are needed, to oppose the force of that widely wasting evil, is too manifest to require laboured proof. Even with the double defence of eternal rewards and eternal punishments, virtue is not too strong, nor are men too much afraid to sin. Have not the friends of virtue, then, reason to fear, that, if you take away the terrors of eternal woe, the hopes of everlasting bliss will not be found sufficient to secure the good of the universe ? If it should prove, that the interests of our race require both these forces, which my text brings to bear upon the mind, will not the removal of the terrors of endless woe, be false mercy, and thus cruelty in the utmost degree ?

Nor should it be forgotten, that those who fly to the annihilation of the wicked, as a relief from eternal pains, do in some sense admit an eternity of punishments. For it will be a punishment to be blotted out of being, and that penalty of extinction will endure for ever. For though the penalty will not be felt, it will exist ; and if not known to the wicked, it will be well known, not only to God, but to all the just. If, then, we admit a punishment of sin, that will virtually endure to eternity, and will be well known to all the most intelligent, reflecting, and important part of the universe ; can we be sure that it will not be right to perpetuate the being of the wicked, that they may know and feel their eternal doom ?

Besides, it should be recollected, that, if the wicked are to be annihilated, they must all be punished alike. Whatever degrees of guilt there may have been in their tempers, or conduct, there can be no degrees in annihilation. This is one in-



stantaneous, uniform act. The least guilty person, who should fall under this sentence, would suffer equally with him who was the vilest monster in the universe. Would this be equitable? Is it a notion worthy to be set up as a rival to the express declaration of the Bible? Eternal punishments may admit of very different degrees of intensity.

If the Scripture be allowed to speak, we must own that there are wicked beings, given up to positive torment, and not annihilated. Fallen spirits are not blotted out of being, but are preserved to suffer. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 6.

Some will say, that the wicked, after suffering for a while, may be restored to virtue and to bliss. But it is natural to ask, whether torment is the school of virtue? Will the blasphemies of the damned educate us for the joys of the blessed? What evidence have we, that the commencement of the miseries of the wicked, in the horrors of their last moments, improves their character? Are there not melancholy proofs of the contrary? The pains which have seized the dying sinner, have often provoked him to utter blasphemous imprecations against God, which have frightened from the scene men of iron nerves.

This notion of transition from future punishment to final bliss, is but equivalent to the doctrine of a second probation, after that of the present life has failed. We ask, then, what shall be done if this second fail? Must it be followed by a third, and that by a fourth, and so on in endless succession, or till one among all the probations shall succeed to restore the creature to holiness and God? What reason have we to expect such a course of trials? Reason has not suggested it to men, in general; for the common sense of mankind has led them to



conclude that this is the only state of probation, and that, in the next world, we shall experience a final retribution. Nor has revelation given us a hint of any thing else. The passage from which the motto of this Lecture is taken, exhibits the same view of the arrangement of the sovereign Arbiter of our fate. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick,

or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 31—46.

But the grand objection to eternal punishments is derived from the terror which they inspire. We cannot, indeed, wonder that, in a world of transgressors, there should be a strong feeling against punishments. He that should consult the criminals in Newgate, would hear loud outcries against prisons, fetters and gibbets. But who does not see, that this is the natural consequence of their character and conduct ? It is so obvious that a child could not miss it. And can we be wise and impartial reasoners, if we do not suspect ourselves of being led astray by our prejudices and self-interest, when reasoning against the punishment, denounced by the Supreme Governor, against sins which we have committed ?

While the great force of the argument against the eternity of future punishment lies in the word *shocking*, it should not be forgotten, that there are many things which are shocking, and yet true. Were I to describe war, simply as it is, without any attempt at exaggeration, addressing your judgment, and leaving your passions to sleep, would not cool reason pronounce that to be shocking which every one knows to be the common practice of mankind ?

It may, however, be said this applies to man, who will do shocking things, and to the practice of the worse part of mankind, who will do what the cooler judgment and more benevolent temper of the better portion of our race condemn. This is so true as to deserve careful consideration. I will, then, ask, whether we might not describe the execution of a murderer, with perfect fidelity, and yet compel you to exclaim

shocking? This, however, is the act of the magistrate, who is the guardian of virtue; or, if you please, of the law, which has no passions. How, then, do you defend this shocking scene? You reply, it admits of a very obvious defence; for whatever horrors attend a public execution, they did not originate with the magistrate, but with the murderer. It is crime that makes punishment necessary, and that is answerable for all the miseries which attend the execution of the last sentence of the law. Does it require any great stretch of reason to apply this to eternal punishment, and to give to God the benefit of that defence, which we so readily urge in the magistrate's behalf? Is not sin the cause of all that is shocking? Is not this, then, the proper object of detestation and horror? And should we not exclaim, Alas! that men will, with such consequences before their eyes, rush upon that which is so hateful to their Maker, and so injurious to the universe, that it is necessary to punish it with eternal pains?

The horrors of such a prospect I readily admit; I feel the full force of the revulsion which the thought of a creature doomed to eternal misery creates. But what then? Am I not, therefore, 'a more credible, because I am a reluctant, a constrained witness, in behalf of the doctrine? I would escape a conclusion so horrible; but I cannot. If I consult my feelings, I may, as well as others, deny eternal punishments. At how many indescribable facts do my feelings revolt? If, then, I make my judgment my counsellor, it conducts me, in spite of my reluctance, to the conclusion that the wicked go to everlasting punishment.

If I deny every thing that shocks my feelings, I must contradict the testimony of my eyes and ears. What scenes of misery does this world present? if the justice of God visits sin with such conse-

quences, even in this world, where mercy and patience prevail, what may we not expect where retributive justice must exert its rights ?

Nor let it be forgotten, that on those who have rejected the religion of Christ, vengeance will be charged to assert the injured rights of slighted mercy. The honours of the law are dear to him who gave it, amidst the terrors of Sinai; and can we wonder if the credit of the Gospel is dearer still, to him that sealed it with the blood of Calvary. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ?"—Heb. ii. 2, 3.

The loudest declaimers against the cruel doctrine of eternal punishment are themselves the most cruel enemies of our race. They who tempt men to brave the horrors of perdition, have much need to fear, lest their own doom should be aggravated by the blood of others laid to their charge.

They will be the more severely and the more justly punished, for this attempt to make their fellow creatures brave their Maker's wrath, because the bold infidel knows, that often, while he mocks he trembles, and he suspects that to be false which he labours to make another believe to be true. The recollection of this, in another world, must be an exquisite torment, and the reproaches of those whom he has ruined, must give to the dagger, which conscience will brandish, an edge unutterably keen. It was this which Christ intended to teach, when he represented the rich man in hell, saying, "Send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham ; but if

one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—Luke xvi. 28—31. It was not benevolence, which has no place in hell, but a selfish fear lest the company of those whom he had contributed to ruin, should aggravate his own misery, that made the lost creature plead for some one to be sent, to warn his brethren, lest they should come to the same place of torment.

O that this consideration might not only induce the miserable caterers for perdition, to desist from the attempt to ruin others; but might also cause them to seek that mercy which would snatch them from the ruin they now court, but could never endure! For it is still possible, through the grace of the Redeemer, to escape the wrath to come. But a little longer continuance in the cause of infidelity may place mercy at an eternal, hopeless distance.

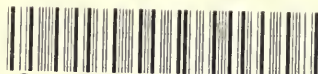
Christians, bind to your hearts the volume which speaks words of life, whereby you are saved from endless pains, and inspired with hopes of such joys as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Thus blessed yourselves, seek to be blessings to others, by diffusing the knowledge of your religion, and shewing how worthy it is of all acceptance.

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